Interactive Problem Solving: **Negotiating Identity Aspects** of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

A study on the dialogue methodology of Professor Herbert C. Kelman

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Acknowledgements

The idea for this study emerged during a lecture on Conflict and Peace Studies in the course of my Master Program at the London School of Economics, when I first learnt about a method of dialogue workshops, which had been initiated by John W. Burton nearly fifty years ago, and developed by Herbert C. Kelman into what is known today as Interactive Problem Solving. The method has fascinated me with its employment of social-psychological processes for the purposes of understanding the impetus for conflict behavior, and of making conflict resolution tools available.

My motivation to engage in a study of Interactive Problem Solving has been to pin-point the social-psychological processes that are active during the application of the method. The study focuses on making hidden processes tangible with the aim of showing the efficiency of the method and to strengthening the stand of scholars that are taking into consideration the indispensable and challenging psychological factor of conflict.

My gratitude for being able to conduct this study goes to my doctoral tutor Professor Kurt R. Spillmann, whom I admire for his courageous contribution to the qualitative approach of conflict analysis, and whom I thank for his kind encouragement and patience. I especially thank Professor Herbert C. Kelman for his trust and for granting me access to principal research material that made this study possible, which tries to pay a humble tribute to his invaluable contribution to the field of applied social-psychological methods. I thank my parents for their unconditional and compassionate support, my husband for his loving care, and my colleagues and friends for many fruitful discussions and continuing encouragement. Most of all, I thank the former workshop participants for their trust and dedication – talking to each one of you in person, has made this fascinating journey worth while.

"All conflicts are identity conflicts" John Paul Lederach

The aim of the present study is to understand how the social-psychological method *Interactive Problem Solving* (IPS), developed by Herbert C. Kelman, can contribute to the resolution of conflict. The study looks at the application of the method in dialogue workshops to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Its leading argument holds that *identity* is not only a possible conflict cause but could also work towards finding conflict solutions. The study describes processes that form our identity and explores how aspects of our identity can be discussed and changed. By retracing a set of consecutive workshop discussions held during the Peace Process between 1990 and 2000, the study reveals instances, where Israeli and Palestinian participants were able to negotiate identity changes. The nature and quality of the traced identity changes are then evaluated based on 13 interviews, held with former workshop participants. By generating a good understanding of how identity formation processes can be engaged in conflict resolution, this study seeks to strengthen the case for methods like IPS, which employ social-psychological concepts to address identity aspects.

Introduction

This study approaches identity not only as a possible conflict cause, but also as a tool for constructive conflict resolution. Identity, which is not an immutable and stagnant state but an ongoing development, contains processes that influence the behavior of conflict parties. Identity has a particular bearing on conflict dynamic because it determines whom we perceive as friend or foe, and whether we deal with conflict constructively or destructively. The social-psychological processes of identity formation contain the capacity for empathy and enmity and harbor the mechanisms accounting for cooperative as well as for obstructive behavior. Exploring the formation of identity structures therefore, offers access to a better understanding of conflict behavior and of ways to respond to such behavior in a constructive way.

Understanding identity formation processes is particularly relevant with regard to resolving existential protracted conflicts[1] as fought between different identity groups, such as, for example in Cyprus, Northern Ireland or Sri Lanka.

The focus of this study will be on the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict the national identity structures of the conflict parties have become instrumental to the conflict's dynamic and vice versa. The struggle over national identity between Israelis and Palestinians has led them to view their conflict in zero-sum terms (Kelman, 1987, 2001). The parties perceive not only the disputed territory and resources, but also their national identity and existence, which they intrinsically link to their homeland, as finite goods. In the view of each conflict party, the other's national existence and national identity can only prevail at the demise of their own national existence. The threat of destruction and nonexistence has shaped each group's self-definition. The self-definition or identity of each group in turn, has exacerbated the conflict and impeded its resolution.

To resolve the conflict in terms of reconciling the two parties, Israelis and Palestinians would need to remove the negation of the other as a central component of their own identity. Removing the negation of the other implies to accommodate the existence of the other within one's own collective identity, at least in the sense of acknowledging the legitimacy of the other's national narrative without necessarily fully agreeing with that narrative. A revision of each party's national identity is in principle possible, because identity formation is in constant flux. In a conflict situation, however, revising the sense of self feels very threatening and is therefore not easily engaged in. An identity revision can only occur if it confirms, rather than threatens, a conflict party's core sense of self. A situation that allows for an identity revision can be induced by geopolitical developments or by being specifically supported through official and unofficial conflict resolution efforts.

Diplomatic efforts that work with identity formation processes as a tool for constructively solving conflicts are scarce. One of them is *Interactive Problem Solving*, a method – developed by Herbert C. Kelman – with the aim

of offering high-level representatives of conflict parties the possibility to engage in analytical discussions of conflict issues in dialogue workshops.

IPS has been applied to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the 1970s but most continuously during the Peace Process between 1990 and 2000. Interactive problem-solving workshops formed part of the Peace Process, which in its entirety accelerated changes leading to an accommodation of each conflict party's national existence. The signing of the Oslo Accords mirrored the changes in both parties' national identity and seemed to pave the way towards a comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but so far has not led to that end.

The aim of the present study is to contribute to the research field of peace and conflict studies and to strengthen methods like IPS, which employ social-psychological concepts to address identity aspects. The study wants to explore how working with identity formation processes can contribute to the resolution of conflict. For this purpose the study looks behind the scenes of IPS to discover how its social-psychological concepts function, both in theory and as a practical method. The study retraces how the method evolved conceptually to employ identity formation processes for resolving conflict, and to what extent identity formation processes have impacted the method's most continuous application during the Peace Process. Thus, the leading research question of the study aims at finding out: "how has the identity factor influenced the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process between 1990 and 2000?"

The term *identity factor* is defined here as the processes that account for the ongoing formation of identity as well as for the employment of those processes for the purpose of changing identity aspects to enhance the development of cooperative and peaceful relations between opponent parties. Identity changing mechanisms include systematic employment of identity

formation processes as a conflict resolution tool, as well as macro-level developments that lead, in an unsystematic way, to identity changes that support peaceful relations. The dynamics of the Peace Process refer to official and unofficial efforts that contributed to a cooperative political atmosphere culminating in the peace agreement of 1993 between the Israelis and Palestinians and the ensuing final status negotiations.

The research of the study follows a qualitative tradition[2] and is displayed in a narrative form describing two cases of the application of IPS, the Continuing Workshop as well as the Joint Working Group to avoid *le cas pure*[3]. The author conducted active interviews[4] with a non-standardized questionnaire that allowed for an individual adaptation of questions according to the course of the interview and the subjects raised by the interviewees.

To discuss the research question, the first part of the study, containing chapter one to three, establishes theoretical components of IPS, the second part, containing chapter four to nine, describes the practical application of IPS, and the third part discusses the observed findings.

Chapter one situates IPS within a newly emerging research field of conflict resolution relying on the identity formation processes. Driven by the aim of showing how identity formation can account for conflict phenomena, the second chapter establishes the process elements of the identity factor by explaining how individual and group identities evolve. The third chapter looks at how the identity factor can impact on conflict behavior and shows how IPS has evolved into an identity management method employing process elements of identity formation as a conflict resolution tool.

Chapter four situates the study within the historical context of the Peace Process, before chapter five and six trace processes of negotiating identity aspects at the micro-level of IPS workshops and relate them to macro-level developments of the Peace Process. Based on observatory notes, taken by third-

party staff members, the study follows two different forms of applied IPS, the Continuing Workshop – a pure discussion format, and the Joint Working Group – where participants jointly wrote concept papers that were published.

The concluding chapters analyse the influence of the identity factor on the Peace Process based on interviews with former workshop participants and third-party members. Chapter seven, eight and nine evaluate the general impact of IPS as a conflict resolution tool, assess what kind of identity changes the method was able to produce, what its limitations are, and reflect on the nature and quality of the discerned changes.

Notes:

[1] Edward Azar defines protracted conflicts as hostile interactions between communal groups that focus on religious, cultural or ethnic identity, and which persist over long periods of time with sporadic outbreaks of violence. See for example in: *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases* (Aldershot, UK: Dartmouth, 1990), 2.

[2] The study's research design is a non-numerical secondary participant observation, relying on the collection of documents from first-hand participant observation and individual interviewing, resulting in an informal content analysis. Cf.: Martin W. Bauer and George Gaskell, "Quality, Quantity and Knowledge Interests" in *Qualitative Researching with Text Image and Sound* (London, UK: Sage, 2000), 3-17: 5.

[3] Johan Galtung describes the difficulties of finding le cas pur or the ideal case knowing that each case will differ somewhat. See for example: *Theory and Methods of Social Research* (London, UK: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., Second edition, 1969), 16-17.

[4] Active interviews in contrast to traditional interviews take into consideration how interview responses are produced in the interaction between interviewer and respondent, without losing sight of the meanings produced or the circumstances that condition the meaning-making process. The analytic objective is to show how what is being said relates to the experience that is being studied. Cf.: James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, "Active Interviewing", in *Qualitative Research Theory, Method and Practice*, edited by David Silverman (London, UK: Sage, 1997), 127.

1 Identity Management

That the identity factor has a causal relevance for the analysis of protracted social conflicts is not new. Several scholars describe identity-based conflicts as being caused by frustrated basic needs and rights like participation, consistency, security, recognition and distributive justice, which are necessary for the development of all people (Burton, 1987, 1990; Azar, 1990; Fisher, 1997). Jay Rothman characterizes identity-based conflicts as being "[…] deeply rooted in the underlying individual human needs and values that together constitute people's social identities, particularly in the context of group affiliations, loyalties, and solidarity" (1997: 6).

New are the implications of the identity factor for the management and the resolution of conflict. Only a handful of scholars have so far employed identity-forming mechanisms to change identity structures for the resolution of conflict, an approach called *identity management* (Korostelina, 2007: 204). *Interactive Problem Solving* (IPS) – developed and applied by Herbert C. Kelman – is one of the few conflict resolution methods of identity management. IPS works with the underlying processes of identity formation to "negotiate" national identity aspects.

Identity management refers to conflict resolution efforts, which employ communication techniques and conceptual tools to change or redefine identity with the aim of mitigating conflict (Korostelina, 2007: 204). Identity management evolved within the discipline called *conflict resolution*, and is to be situated within the realm of the diplomatic spectrum that Joseph V. Montville named *track two diplomacy* (Montville and Davidson, 1981).

Before the term *identity management* emerged, some conflict resolution scholars besides Kelman have already referred to the identity factor as an

instrument to solve conflict. Among them are Terrel A. Northrup (1989), Jay Rothman (1997) as well as Richard D. Ashmore, Lee Jussim and David Wilder (2001). Northrup analyses the dynamic of identity to deduce propositions for the transformation of intractable conflicts. Northrup has identified processes of identity formation that account for conflict escalation from which he elaborated a four-stage conflict escalation model that is further discussed in the third chapter of this study. Rothman has developed a framework called ARIA (1997: 5ff.). The ARIA framework is named after the four phases of its process: Antagonism, Resonance, Invention, and Action. The framework focuses on transforming identity conflicts relying on a comprehensive analysis that allows for the recognition of identity-based conflicts and a constructive response to such conflicts. Ashmore and his co-editors of *Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict and Conflict Reduction*, point to the possibility of reducing intergroup conflict by employing social-psychological mechanisms (2001: 242ff.). The editors plan a future volume dedicated entirely to the approach of conflict reduction through social identification processes.

Conflict Resolution and Track Two Diplomacy

Conflict resolution, as an academic discipline and a school of thought of International Relations, analyzes the psychological origins of political conflict and "works to discover nonviolent, constructive, and eventually mutually-satisfactory solutions to […] complex and long-standing ethnic and sectarian disputes" (Montville, 1987: 8). By taking psychological factors into consideration, conflict resolution complements the analysis of conflict as traditionally approached, for example, by the realist tradition of International Relations.[1] According to the realist tradition, conflicts are caused by clashing political interests and claims to power and cannot be fully resolved but only settled or suppressed by coercive means. In contrast to approaches that focus on

settling interests through a brokered political agreement, conflict resolution aims at resolving underlying conflict causes. Conflict resolution is not only a field of study but also a practice-oriented approach that aims at developing concrete conflict solutions that will satisfy all conflict parties. For its development conflict resolution relies on theoretical concepts as much as it draws on practical experience.

Track two diplomacy can be defined as comprising professional non-governmental, informal and unofficial activities attempting to analyze, prevent, resolve and manage conflicts by non-state actors (Diamond and Mac Donald, 1993:4). In contrast to official diplomatic efforts, termed track one diplomacy[2], track two efforts are neither organized by nor do they engage government officials, or if they do the latter act as private individuals and not in their official capacity. The aim of track two efforts is to change the quality of the relationship between conflict parties by addressing and resolving underlying conflict causes. The means employed by track two efforts are non-coercive and facilitating, in the sense that third parties do not impose and not even propose conflict solutions but assist conflict parties to develop their own solutions in an interactive process.

Track two diplomacy also differs from grass-root initiatives, business sector contributions, or peace activism, which John W. Mac Donald described as ranging from track three to track nine peace-procuring activities (2002: 55). In contrast to grass-root activities track two diplomacy is an elite approach as it engages highly influential representatives of the respective conflict parties who are close to their political leadership and have the possibility to impact the public opinion of their polity.

Track two initiatives can be employed at different stages of a peace process. They can operate in the absence of official negotiations, act as a preparation for them, or occur parallel to them as well as to other peace

procuring initiatives. Second track diplomacy does by no means intend to substitute or bypass other peace procuring activities. Its objective is to complement governmental as well as grass-root efforts by offering measures that other initiatives cannot.

Although the methodological approach of identity management is recent, certain forms of identity "negotiation" have been used as a tool to solve conflict between and within states as early as the 1950s. Valérie-Barbara Rosoux (2001) observed the phenomenon between France and Germany and Daniel L. Byman (1997/98) and Karim Mezran (2001) in Morocco.

Negotiating National Identity

Rosoux describes the formal negotiations of France and Germany in the late 1950 and early 1960s as a case for the emergence of a changed identity promoting peaceful coexistence between two nations. The former adversaries developed new traits within their national identities through elite negotiations. The development was induced by the – at the time – German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and the French President Charles de Gaulle. The negotiations they instilled focused on overcoming the conflicting past and accentuating their commonalities through a process of mutual re-identification. One of their most important steps was to generate understanding and officially recognize the suffering of the other nation. The two elite politicians changed aspects of the national identity of the two peoples by turning the focus from past enmities towards the solidarity between them and by redefining the past wars as collective sufferings. The new German national identity included acceptance of responsibility for the most difficult episodes of national history. The new French national identity encompassed recognition of the French negative actions and acknowledgment of Germany as a great nation.

In Morocco consultations between the elite and populist movements led to a definition of national identity that became widely shared by the population at large; while the lack of such a negotiation process led to an identity crisis and an ensuing violent conflict in Algeria. After Morocco gained independence in 1956, King Mohammed V acted as a mediator between the Arabist Istiqlal and the Berberist Popular Movement and facilitated an agreement around their different identity concepts. He developed the conception of Moroccanism as a basis for territorial nationalism that encompassed a new identity overarching but not suppressing local Arab, or Berber and tribal or urban identities. King Mohammed V conducted negotiations on the basis of an issue approach and negotiated new identity aspects by discussing single issues. Each party was asked to make concessions in exchange for obtaining objectives with regard to specific topics. For example, in exchange for the parties' consent to the formation of a democratic National Consultative Assembly, the King offered the Istiqlal an agrarian reform and the Berbers recognition of their political party (Mezran, 2001: 156).

Byman draws a different picture of the same period in Morocco. He holds that the monarch used a stick and carrot strategy of coercion and co-optation to preserve ethnic peace and manipulated rather than negotiated identities of individual Moroccans (1997/98: 13). Byman especially observed manipulation of identities during the reign of Hassan II, who resumed power after his father's death in 1961 and used repressive policies to discourage and even crush tribal revolts. Byman's description of the emergence of a Moroccan identity shows that elite politicians can use identity-forming mechanisms to coerce a new identity. Bymann stresses that coercively induced identity changes only account for ethnic peace as long as the enforcing power structures remain intact (1997/98: 23-24).

Interactive Problem Solving

The preceding observations describe changes in identity structures of conflict parties that were neither systematically introduced as a conflict resolution method nor consciously negotiated by the conflict parties. Kelman, conversely, conceptualized his conflict resolution method in a way that aspects of national identity can be negotiated in an analytical manner. In contrast to the three foregoing examples, in the case of IPS identity negotiation is not imposed by elite politicians but is contained in a communication technique applied in conflict resolution workshops, in which representatives of conflict parties voluntarily participate.

IPS has been applied mostly to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict under the auspices of a research project called Program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution (PICAR) located at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University. PICAR grew out of the efforts, starting in the 1970s, undertaken by Kelman and his associates to bring together politically influential Israelis and Palestinians in face-to-face dialogue groups under the guidance of a third-party panel of social scientists. Kelman developed IPS based on the work of John W. Burton (1969, 1979), who applied a problem-solving communication technique to tackle conflict issues in analytical discussions. Kelman describes the method as an "unofficial, academically based third-party approach to the analysis and resolution of international and intercommunal conflicts" (1996: 501).

The fullest application of IPS consists of interactive problem-solving workshops (Kelman, 1972: 169). The scope of the workshops is twofold. First, they intend to achieve individual changes in the workshop participants at the micro level of group discussions and second, at transferring those changes to the macro level of the policy-making process of the two communities. The workshops offer members of conflicting parties a private and confidential

setting, where they can meet with an impartial third party to engage in direct and noncommittal communication. The workshops aim at engendering a change of perspective by opening up a possibility for conflict parties to explore each other's points of view and see the situation through the eyes of the other. Thereby each party gains new insights that may lead to a changed perception of themselves and of the other conflict party. Departing from the newly gained perspectives, the workshops aim at eventually generating a gradual transformation of the conflict parties' relationship.

The method guides workshop participants towards analytical discussions of conflict issues that contain, or are, elements of national identity. Without specifically pointing to it, the discussion format leads participants to negotiate aspects of identity elements with the aim of abandoning obstructive and integrating constructive parts of their national identity and building a new structure that accommodates the national existence of the other. For example in the case of the two parties' relationship to the land, one of the defining elements of both Israeli and Palestinian national identity, each party perceives that relationship as an exclusive right, rendering claims of the other group as illegitimate. According to Kelman, the parties have to "[…] accept the possibility that certain elements of identity may be shared with the other, acknowledging that the other also has a profound attachment to the land anchored in authentic historical ties to it" (2001:193).

The general workshop format comprises four distinct issues: workshop setting, selection of participants, pre-workshop sessions, and the workshop structure. The structure of each workshop comprises ground rules concerning different communication techniques as well as the role of the third party, and an agenda. The communication techniques employed, consist of using a de-escalatory language that enables parties to engage in an empathic exchange of perspectives that engages them in actively listening to each other and

formulating their statements in a comprehensible way. The employed language assists parties in formulating ideas for mutually reassuring gestures and actions that enable them to engage in a creative problem-solving approach that allows participants to jointly analyze conflict issues and develop new ideas and insights for possible conflict solutions. The procedural agenda structures the course of the workshop into five different stages including: information exchange, needs analysis, joint thinking about solutions, discussion of constraints, and joint thinking about overcoming constraints (Kelman and Cohen, 1976: 277).

Identity-Based Training and Identity Reconstruction

In contrast to Kelman's methodology that implicitly contains the negotiation of identity aspects, Korostelina employs techniques that raise awareness of how identity-forming mechanisms act on conflict dynamics or even introduce the underlying processes of identity formation as a conceptual tool to conflict parties.

The technique of *identity-based training* aims at developing understanding for the role of identity in increasing and decreasing conflict in seven ways (Korostelina, 2007: 213ff.). The technique consists of, first, showing the existence of multiple identity systems, second, demonstrating how a salient identity can lead to stereotypes and hostile attitudes, third, developing a tolerant multi-identity approach, fourth, showing how patterns of identity formation and intergroup dynamics can lead to conflict, fifth, building analytical skills and recognition of identity-based conflict, sixth, demonstrating methods for tolerance building, and seventh, generating conflict resolution skills through the knowledge of group dynamics.

Identity reconstruction workshops are designed to reduce the salience of identity by transforming a dominant identity into multiple identities. The

technique aims at replacing the structure of narratives, negative attitudes and stereotypes that are based on the perception of the "other" as the enemy, with a non-oppositional structure rooted in a non-violent self-image (Korostelina, 2007: 236).

In a first step the workshop technique kindles an analytic discussion of a conflict scenario that is very distinct from the situation of the conflict parties. For example, Korostelina introduced the topic of discriminatory practices in the Dominican Republic to a workshop discussion of Crimean conflict groups. Her aim was to generate understanding of root-causes for violent actions, alleviate changes in perceptions, and generate recognition of hostile behavior of ingroups among participants. In a second step Korostelina approaches a revision of each conflict party's own identity by emphasizing each group's peaceful, reconciliatory and cooperative features in their self-description. In a third step, the technique aims at turning the formed models of peaceful self-concepts into constructive action, by forming a common overarching identity that can de-escalate conflict.

Exploring the Implementation of Identity Management

As identity management is a new field of expertise within the realm of conflict and peace studies, it is the aim of the present study to ascertain the very important contribution of identity management as an action-research tool for the resolution of conflicts. Psychological processes have long been disregarded not only in the scope of understanding the causes of conflicts, but also in terms of developing methods that serve as practical tools for solving conflict.

IPS has captured the idea of learning to understand the identity factor for the purpose of employing identity formation processes for the resolution of conflicts. It has thereby contributed to the formation of the new research area and laid the ground for the development of further methods to tackle complex

conflict situations. It is the intent of the present study to contribute to the further establishment of identity management by exploring the content of IPS, and evaluating the scope of its application to Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the Oslo Process.

[1] The realist tradition of International Relations founds itself on Machiavellian principles and the objectives of power politics. The tradition views nation-states as living in an anarchical society amongst which, war is inevitable because each follows its own interests and power considerations. Conflicts can only be settled through coercive means or the use of force. In Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000: 7-11).

[2] Track one initiatives are organized by states or international organizations and thereby occur at an official governmental level. The means employed by track one actors comprise the use of their own power to broker or even impose an agreement by ways of threats or inducements. The aim of track one efforts is to settle conflicts by accommodating interests of the conflict parties.

2 The Identity Factor

In order to analyze how conflict resolution methods like IPS can work on and with the identity factor, we need to understand how identity is formed and how it acts on our thinking and our behavior. Our identity is not a given, but something that we gradually and continuously form. It is through the general dynamic of identity formation that we acquire an individual and a social identity.

The identity factor is essential when it comes to understanding our actions as it provides the impetus to determine our own life course. At the beginning of our lives we are entirely dependent on others to take care of us and completely lack control over the course of our lives. We are reliant on parenting caretakers to respond to our existential needs of food, shelter, and security to stay alive.

Children react to the lack of control with aggressive impulses. The desire to respond to our needs is abidingly strong already from the earliest days of our lives. Because we would like to be able to satisfy our needs ourselves we start to imitate those who provide for us in order to attain their abilities. By doing this we begin to develop our identity. The dynamic that spurs our desire of attaining knowledge about our environment and about who we are in relation to that environment is the dynamic that spurs the development of our identity.

Identity development continues during adult life. Our identity encompasses a sense that we are safe in the world, physically and psychologically, by providing us with knowledge and control. A situation in which we are completely unable to exert a certain amount of control over our environment, in which we can no longer predict how our behavior affects the response of others, and in which we lose sense of who we are, is unbearable for

us. The continuing urge to maintain self-determining abilities keeps the development of our identity alive.

Individual Identity

In every day life identity is used to describe a wide range of personal attributes like someone's gender, profession, religious orientation and nationality. It further includes a person's character and psychological traits such as feelings of competence, intellectual interests, and personal tastes (Northrup, 1989: 65). We refer to our identity to express what we do or do not like, feel comfortable with, or equate ourselves to. For example, we say that we can or cannot identify ourselves with a given idea, a group of people or a way of living. Identity is used here to describe a conscious act of orientating ourselves. It provides the answer to the basic questions „who am I?“, „where do I belong?“, and „how do I fit in?“ (Oyserman, 2004: 5).

Our identity has to do with who we are and what we know about ourselves. Vamık Volkan describes identity, or the sense of self, as the impression we have of how our emotional, intellectual, and physical components respond to the world about us and to pressures arising within ourselves (1988: 4). Volkan’s description refers to three core elements that constitute identity. The three elements consist of: first, *that* we actually depend on a response or interaction to form our identity, second, *what* we respond to or interact with and third, *how* we respond.

The identity forming process depends on an interaction between our self and our external environment. We cannot develop an identity without interacting with those around us. However, we do not only interact with the outside world, we also respond to our inner components, as Volkan refers to the world about us as well as to the pressures arising within ourselves. In addition to the process occurring between internal and external entities, a

second process is at work between different internal entities that constitute that self, which we are trying to get a sense of. *What* we respond to consists, thus, of our environment as well as of our internal structure.

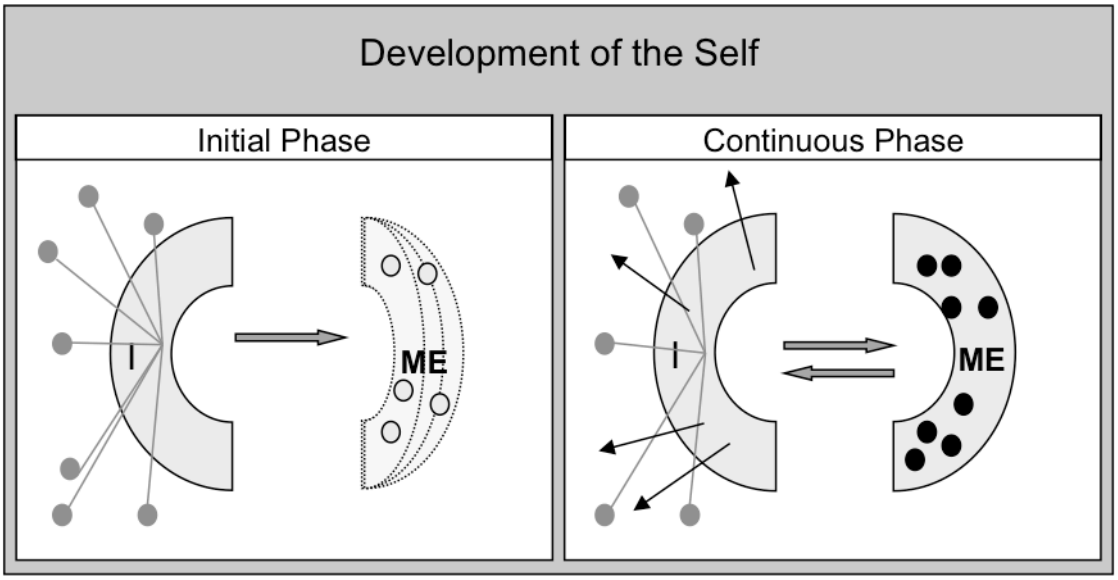
Further, the process of forming our identity is determined by *how* these interactions occur. Our physical, emotional, and intellectual components respond to other human beings and the experiences we share with them. The experiences that were made and the new information stemming from these experiences are then processed within our self. The process of dealing with new information creates a friction between external and internal elements, which Volkan refers to as pressures. The friction or tension between our internal structure and new information can be compared to what occurs when we engage in a dialogue with others. In a constructive discussion our own opinions collide with those of others and, if we allow it, are transformed by new inputs. If we can make sense of new information in relation to what we know already, we engage in a learning process. In the same manner, our self will grow if we accept and integrate new items of information.

How we form our identity is, thus, through a learning process: a process through which we build the repertory of what we know about ourselves – or our self – and through which we make sense of our experiences. The way we get to know ourselves is tied to knowing the world in which we live and to making sense of ourselves in relation to that world. We are not born with a fixed identity but continuously construct it through our social interactions.

Getting to Know Our "Self"

George Herbert Mead shows how we construct our identity by explaining how the structure of our self is organized in order to engage in the process of forming our identity. Mead describes the individual self as the mechanism through which society is absorbed by the human mind (1968: 222).

The self can be viewed as a miniature society within the individual. We build a picture of society within ourselves by internalizing certain societal codes and conventions. The elements that constitute the self as Mead views it are the *I* and the *Me* (1968: 216). The two elements converse with each other, in a way analogous to how two people talk to each other. According to Mead, this conversational relationship between the I and the Me (which is only possible through relationships between individuals) constitutes the process of identity formation.[1]



The I and the Me are of a different nature and have accordingly different tasks within their conversational relation. At the beginning of our lives only the I is active and reacts to occurrences in our environment in an immediate and spontaneous way. The impressions that the I gathers through its interaction with the outside world are processed and stored in the Me. Thereby the I creates the Me.

According to Mead, the Me is a picture, a reflection of the outside world (1968: 218). The Me processes information collected by the I and assimilates it in a way that this new information becomes part of the Me. Among the newly

gained information are norms and conventions that govern interactions between individuals. The Me develops into an autonomous entity by organizing the gathered experiences and societal codes. We thereby integrate the parameters of our social environment into our psychological structure. The Me, thus, builds our internal psychological structure. This structure consists of the picture or concept we have of our selves and others. They are the stock of data that originates from our very first contacts with those around us and later in life allow us to orientate ourselves when interacting with others. The Me allows us to examine and think about our behavior. It is the realm that offers the basis for what we experience as being in control of our actions.

A conversation between the I and the Me starts when we are confronted with a situation to which we need to react. Our reactions result from a reflective process through which we form a decision that we formulate or act out. The reflective process consists of a dialogue between the I and the Me. The role of the I in this conversation consists of receiving inputs from the outside world. To reach a decision the I consults the conglomerate of structured experiences of the Me. Thereby the Me provides an orientation guide to the I. While the I depends on the Me to take a decision and form a reaction, the decision and reaction are not determined by the Me.

The interaction between the I and the Me allows us to construct a self-representation and thereby to build the core of our identity structure, which contains our biological and cultural heritage such as our ethnic background, capacities and temperamental orientations. While the I perceives what is going on around us, the Me is engaged in processing these impacts, in storing our experiences, and in internalizing new information in a way that they become part of our self. The I can consult the Me about how to react to every new impact, which the I receives. Thereby a whole range of self-representations emerges, which form different layers in the core of our identity.

The different identity layers remain in constant development, as the Me does not only allow us to assimilate new information but also to integrate this knowledge into the concept we have of our self. The capacity of the Me allows us to engage in the learning process through which we form our identity. Identity formation evolves by going through an initial emotional and a second cognitive development phase.

Emotional Development

To explain our emotional development, I refer to modern object-relations theory that originated from Sigmund Freud's work.[2] Object-relations theory studies the development of our self in early childhood. As the development of our identity depends on relations to others, the theory is named object-relations. The theory employs the term *object* primarily to refer to a person other than our self, and more precisely to our inner representation of that person. Before turning to the insights of object-relations theory, we will look at some of Freud's elaborations on the development of our identity during childhood, on which the theory is built.

According to William Bloom, Freud used the term identification to refer to a three-stage process. First, we develop an emotional tie to someone else. Second, we adopt traits of the person, to whom we feel attached, and integrate those traits into our own psychological structure (or self). Third, identification culminates when we share a valued quality like an ideal, a principle, or an emotional attribute with another person (Bloom, 1990; Freud, 1921).[3]

Further, two types of dynamics motivate identification, one is emulative and one is defensive. Emulative motivation refers to an affectionate bond to a parental figure; while defensive motivation refers to a situation, in which a child feels threatened by a parent. Emulative motivation is stimulated when children experience a satisfaction of their needs like hunger and affection.

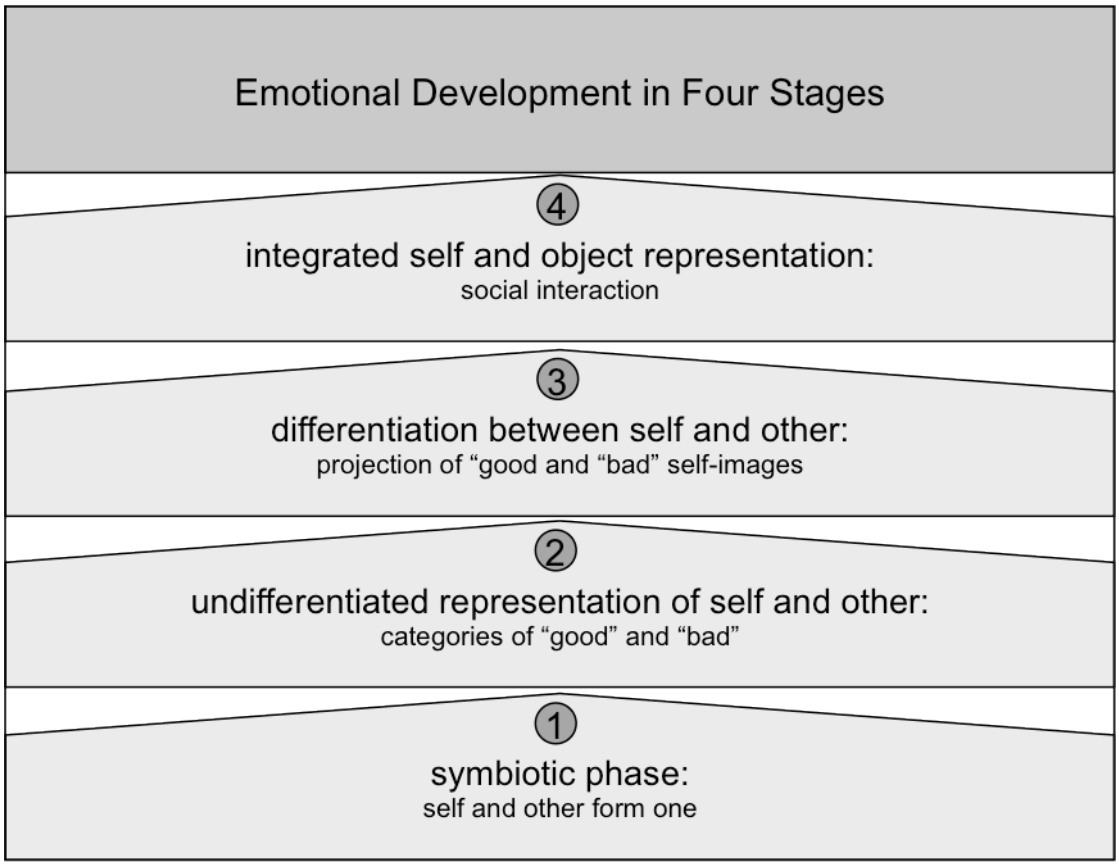
Defensive motivation is stimulated when children fear that those needs will not be satisfied. The lack of need satisfaction is experienced as a threat.

It needs to be emphasized here, that young children perceive such a threat as endangering their lives. Freud understood identification as a dynamic that the child develops in order to survive. A child depends on the affection of parents, their nourishment and protection, to stay alive. According to Freud, children start to imitate and thereby identify themselves with a parent in order to gain control over their own life. Emulatively motivated identification occurs because children want to become, like the nurturing parent, able to answer their needs. Defensively motivated identification occurs because children aim at becoming like the threatening parent, in order to neutralize that threat.

It becomes clear here that the formation of identity is our psychological survival guide. In order to understand the origins of enemy images and other processes that account for conflict behavior, we need to expand on the content of the identity factor a little bit further.

Object-relations theory elaborates on Freud's study of infant development by exploring our emotional capacity as the initial driving force of identity formation. Among the prominent scholars of the theory is Otto Kernberg, who explains that our emotional capacity develops in four stages (1972: 234ff.).

In the first weeks of our lives we experience a symbiotic phase, in which we perceive parenting figures and ourselves as one. In this phase we do not yet have clear representations of object relations. What we absorb (into the Me structure) are memory traces of rewarding, or libidinally gratifying experiences, like cuddling or feeding. At this stage it is most improbable, that we are able to differentiate between our own experiences and the object from which they derive (Jacobson, 1998: 49).



In the second phase, taking place approximately between the fourth and the twelfth week, we develop a first sense of our self, or an undifferentiated self-object representation, as Kernberg calls it (1972: 234). Children form a good image of themselves when they experience a satisfying feeling, like after being fed. This experience builds a memory trace qualified as “only good“. Simultaneously, unpleasant and frustrating experiences, like the dissatisfaction of a need like hunger, result in an undifferentiated “only bad“ self-object representation. These good and bad memory traces are separate. At this development stage we are unable to integrate the two images into one person and therefore perceive ourselves as having two selves: a pleasant and an unpleasant one. The same is true for the parenting person. For example, we perceive the „bad“ mother, who did not satisfy our needs, and the „good“

mother, who did satisfy our needs, as two different persons. Consistent with our pleasant and unpleasant experiences we form separate reservoirs that correspond to the oppositional pairs of good/bad, own/foreign, safe/threatening, in which we store information. Everything that we are familiar with is "only good" and everything we are unfamiliar with is "only bad". These mechanisms are precisely the presuppositions for the later creation of enemy images.

During the third phase, occurring approximately between the sixth and eighteenth week, we experience a first differentiation between self and other. This differentiation occurs first within the "good" self-object representation. The differentiation in the "bad" representation realm occurs later, as early forms of projection complicate that development. Projection here refers to attempts of externalizing "bad" self-object representations.

According to Kernberg, externalization of bad self-object representations is responsible for the so-called stranger anxiety at approximately the age of eight months (1972: 235). Stranger anxiety does not result from previous negative experiences with the person against whom it is directed nor is it a reaction to a real threat. The rejection of the stranger results from feelings of dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction produces anger and aggression, which the child seeks to externalize. The child cannot discharge aggressive impulses against the parenting person because it fears a possible loss of his or her love, on which the child depends. Therefore, the anger is displaced on the stranger in whom the child sees the absence of the "good" parent.

This development accounts for the fact that our identity is also determined by whom we are not and constitutes the mechanism creating enemy images (Oppenheimer, 2006). We decide who we are by demarcating ourselves from those who are different and alien to us. We project self-images that do not correspond with our self-view onto the other. The projected self-images are not inherently negative but only perceived as such because we cannot integrate

them into the existing identity structure and therefore represent a threat to our sense of self. The process of projection is at its basis not of malign intention but an attempt to neutralize internal threats and to strengthen our sense of self. This accounts for the fact that in a conflict situation an enemy image can be dissolved, when a threat to our sense of self can be neutralized. The origin of assembling or dismantling enemy images is, thus, an outcome of the process of self-definition.

Only between the twelfth and the eighteenth month, the beginning of the fourth phase of our emotional development, we start to integrate the previously separate aspects of good and bad within one person. We are now able to perceive ourselves as well as our parental figure as entities with good *and* bad qualities. The more integrated our self-concept becomes, the more the perception we have of our self corresponds to the impact we have on others. At the same time the representation we have of others becomes more integrated, which means that the image we have of someone else corresponds more closely to the real character of that person. In other words, the clearer and more defined our internal structure becomes, the more able we become to establish relationships with other people in our environment.

Slowly we arrive at a stage where we are emotionally ready and capable to engage in various forms of relationships, also in relationships with people who are outside of our own familiar environment or group, and who - in the second development stage - fell under the category of alien and bad. This development continues until the age of six. It becomes possible because we start to *identify* ourselves with those close to us.

Identification here refers to a dual process during which we first imitate traits of others, which we experience through interaction with our familiar environment and then internalize by turning them into our own. Identification with others is an unconscious consequence of the conscious act of imitating

those around us in order to attain emotional autonomy. Emotional autonomy is what we experience when forming a self-concept. We imitate and thereby integrate values and norms, which our parents or other attachment figures of our familiar group teach us. We then internalize them into the Me, the representation of our self and our object-relations, and they become our own norms and values.

A child experiencing this process restructures his or her self-representation through the incorporation of new norms and character traits. Once internalized, these norms and traits will guide our behavior and will serve as a repertory, on the basis of which we will interpret new information. Once such a repertory is established, we create categories, which help us to make sense of our social environment by separating it into comprehensible entities. During this process we develop the ability to respond to others.

Social-Cognitive Development

The development of our cognitive capacity complements our emotional capability by adding the possibility to break free from a reflex controlled behavior. It allows us to supersede patterns like own/alien (everything familiar equals good and everything unfamiliar equals bad) and to develop our ability to respond to and empathize with others. Cognition in general refers to mental processes like thinking, reasoning, inferring, and conceptualizing through which we acquire knowledge and consciousness (Flavell, 1993: 2). Social cognition in particular, on which we focus here, refers to cognitive functions that are directed at the world of human rather than non-human objects and the social-communicative use of language (Flavell, 1993: 3).

Knowledge about social cognition has been greatly advanced by the work of Jean Piaget. According to Piaget, we learn by adapting ourselves to a complex environment (1991). This adaptation, however, is of an extremely

active nature. We do not just passively copy information as it presents itself to our senses, but actively select and interpret information from which we construct our own knowledge. We learn by taking the structure of our surrounding environment into account and by reconstructing it to fit in with our own existing mental framework.

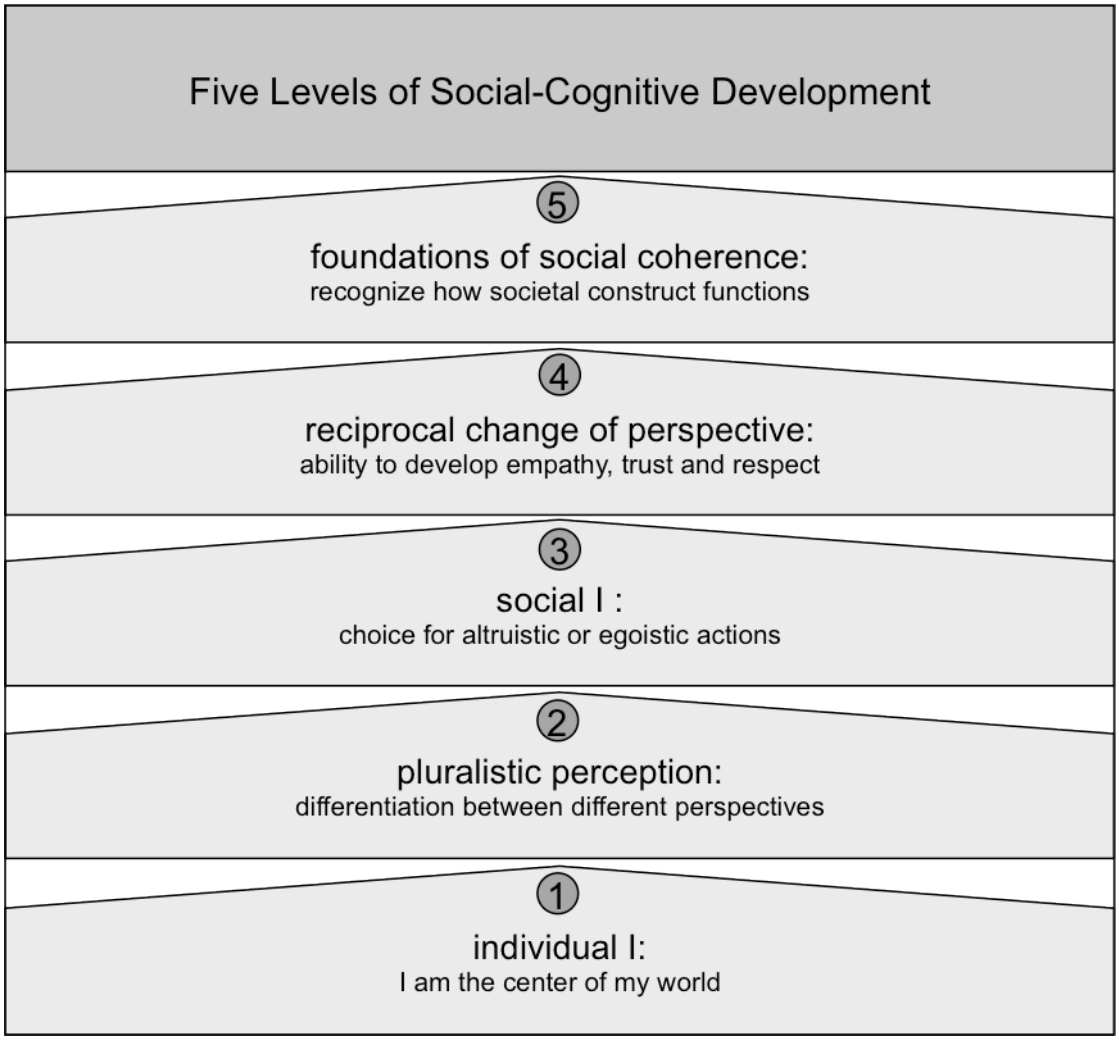
Adaptation, in this sense, consists of two simultaneous and complementary processes, which Piaget called *assimilation* and *accommodation* (1991: 52). He defined assimilation as a repetition of a behavior or concept that we have experienced and as the application of those experiences to new situations. In other words, we interpret objects in terms of our available ways of thinking. For example, a child, who pretends that a chip of wood is a boat, *assimilates* the wood chip to his or her mental concept of a boat. The child would, however, never see a boat in the wood chip if it could not float and were not vaguely boat shaped. Accommodation, therefore, refers to the converse and complementary process of adapting our mental structure to the structure of external stimuli.

Our social-cognitive development starts approximately at the age of six, after we have experienced all stages of the emotional development. Kati and Kurt Spillmann explain that social cognitive development runs through five levels (1989: 21-23).[4]

During the first development stage, we still perceive the world predominantly from our own perspective, which means that our viewpoint equals reality. At this stage we are hardly able to accept a reality different from our own.

At the second level of development, it becomes possible for us to differentiate between various points of view, but we are not yet able to apply the different perspectives to our social interactions. In other words, we are

unable to take thoughts and emotions of others into account with regard to our own behavior.



It is only at the third level that we develop the capability to perceive our own behavior from the perspective of someone else. We recognize and accept that there are many possible perspectives and that people may think and feel differently about the same situation. We are able to see that we have to deal with conflicting motives, which determine whether we do things that are favorable for ourselves, but might not be for others; or choose to act in a way that is favorable for others, but not necessarily advantageous to us. Thereby we

develop the capacity to bear emotional as well as cognitive contradictions and come to understand that we and others sometimes do things, which we do not really want to do and don't do things, which we actually want.

During the fourth level of development, we discover that we can adopt viewpoints of others and that other people can perceive things from our perspective as well. The ability for a reciprocal change of perspective contains the capacity to develop empathy, mutual trust, and respect and thereby enables us to engage in friendships.

Finally, at the fifth level of development, we start to recognize how the whole construct of our society functions and begin to understand the foundations of social coherences. Piaget explains that through continuing interaction with our environment, we actively construct pictures of what we experience, from which we derive structures, patterns and a set of beliefs (1991). By organizing and coordinating new information within the created structures we acquire knowledge. The structures give us a sense of inner stability and allow us to function in the world without being totally overwhelmed by the many stimuli that confront us at every moment.

Erik Erikson describes adult identity as a conglomerate of all single identifications with our surrounding, which we have experienced during childhood (1973: 107). Our adult identity consists of different identity layers, which provide us with points of orientation that we can refer to in order to deal with new information. The sense that we have of our self as adults forms a core construct within the total system of identity layers of which we dispose to navigate in the world. Erikson explains that we need to adapt our identity to socio-cultural circumstances in order to function in society. Thus, our identity does not remain fixed, once we have reached adulthood, but continues to develop by constantly adapting itself to societal demands.

The way we react to those demands and how capable we are in coping with them depends on the state of our identity. Kelman describes three normative identity dimensions that account for our ability of coping with societal demands: *stability*, *integration*, and *authenticity* (1998). In this perspective, the more stable, integrated, and authentic the structure of our identity is, the better equipped we are to handle contradictions and constraints inherent in social interaction.

A *stable* identity is maintained over time and across situations (Kelman, 1998: 5-6). While stability is necessary for an identity to exist at all, the degree of stability can vary considerably due to an individual's nature or to destabilizing experiences. If our identity is stable, it does not mean that it is fixed in the sense of being rigid, but strong enough to maintain a continuous sense of self while responding to new experiences. Our identity is stable if it is open for constant development by accommodating new information within the existing structure and relating new identity elements to old ones.

Our identity is *integrated* if its constituent elements are in communication with each other (Kelman, 1998: 6). Our identity contains various elements that are at times contradictory. If our identity is integrated, we are able to uphold a creative tension between contrasting elements and accept certain inconsistencies of our personality. If the contrasting parts of our identity remain in communication, we are able to think and act in a differentiated way taking into consideration all parts that define us. If our identity becomes disintegrated, we would think in a compartmentalized way and act in an undifferentiated manner.

Our identity is *authentic* if we take our own development into account, reflect our development, and are aware of who we are (Kelman, 1998: 6-7). Authenticity in this sense also implies that we keep track of how new elements relate to the core of our identity and make sure that newly accommodated

identity elements are congruent with that core. This does not mean that we cannot overcome limiting biological or social limitations, or reject experiences that have become incongruent with our evolving identity; as long as we do not deny or repress such unwanted elements. Our identity is authentic if we recognize what part a rejected identity element has played in shaping who we are. Furthermore, the elements of our identity must be our own in order to be authentic. Only if we relate and adapt socially derived identity elements to our own orientations and experiences and again integrate them into our emerging identity structure, do they become authentic.

Social Identity and Group Membership

Our identity varies according to social, cultural and political realities with which we identify and which we integrate into the structure of our self. As the features of collectives within which we live are significant for the constitution of our personal identity, we can say that the adult personal identity expands to encompass in addition a social identity.

The social dimension of an individual identity is influenced by societal roles (Côté and Levine, 2002: 8) and memberships in formal and informal groups. Such a collective can be determined by gender as well as by religious, ethnic or national belonging. Although these allegiances are the most prominent, an individual may also have strong attachments to a province, a city, a parish, a clan, a company, a political party or an interest group. Each group membership contains some evaluative emotional charge and a considerable significance for the individual member's conception of self (Northrup, 1989: 65). If social elements are of great importance to an individual, they become part of the core construct of the self. In other words, a person's individual identity is in part determined by his or her social identity, while social identity is primarily determined by group membership.

Social identification necessitates a conscious determination and direct communicative relationships with those forming a relevant group. Henry Tajfel defines social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept, which derives from his or her knowledge of the membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (1978: 63). An individual needs to truly correspond to a group's traditions and practices, its orientations and goals and act according to them in order to build his or her social identity on the basis of that group. Only if collectively shared experiences, expectations, and orientations are accepted to form the past, present, and future, a socially integrative identity can be constructed.

Our identification with a group is again not fixed but depends on the active renewal of that identification with the constituents of the group. An individual can incorporate many collectives and can acquire or abandon his or her belonging to a given group according to changing experiences, expectations, values, and rules that determine the nature of that group.

Social identity can also be understood as the image that members of a collective construct of themselves, and with which they identify. The identity of a group, however, exists only if its members profess it. Group identity is not something that can be enforced from the outside (Assman, 1992: 132). The identity of a group is a construct that designates a commonality of those forming the group. This communality needs to be specified in each group member's relationship to him or herself and to the world. Collective identities are formed, when individuals agree on qualitative descriptions of their selves and the world. They are communicative constructs that rest on the active personal identification process of the individuals that constitute the group (Straub, 2002: 72).

Adopting a specific collective identity is not motivated by individual goals, or used to achieve personal aims. It serves as a reference point for evaluating means and strategies for collective action. A collective identity can be seen as a language consisting of symbolic codes through which individuals communicate (Eder et al., 2002: 19-20). Codes of collective identities are inclusive and exclusive at the same time, in the same way as a language limits the range of the meaningful by excluding the meaningless. Collective identity codes exclude certain members in order to set boundaries that demarcate the existence of the collective.

Codes of collective identity are not invented from scratch but are based on self-evident symbols embedded in a social group, which can either not be changed at all or only over very long periods of time. The reason for this becomes apparent if we remind ourselves that the principle of identity formation, be it on an individual or on a collective basis, relies on the differentiation between "self" and "other" or "us" and "them". Collective identities link this distinction to unchangeable entities like gender, generation, kinship, ethnicity and nationality, or to longstanding traditions, implicit rules of conduct and social routines. Still, codes of collective identities do not prescribe a boundary of a given group in a mechanical way. Its employment requires interpretation and voluntary decision. Collective identities, like ethnic groups, are neither naturally given nor logically defined, but are socially constructed.

The process of interpretation and construction of collective identity can give way to dissent and conflict. It can, however, also open opportunities for strategic use of the codes of identity. Political actors can use the commitment to values of a collective to mobilize a constituency. The symbolic codes, by reference to which a collective identity constructs itself, provide the range within which issues can be politicized without contesting the overall integration of an identity group. Codes of collective identity although subject to

interpretation are not completely malleable. They set limits within which political strategies can be formulated. The argument that an ethnic conflict can be staged by strategically acting politicians is thus not entirely true. A community can only be mobilized on ethnic grounds if its collective code provides the potential for such action.

Gender, class, regional, national or ethnic collective identities are prerequisites of collective action. The formation of collective identities is an expression of individual actors attempting to solve societal problems. National or ethnic groups are a particular version of that attempt. The national group that we live in is one of the most important social collectives that act on our identity formation, as it provides us with an identity layer that is often core to our sense of self. Nationality or ethnicity can be seen as a specific manifestation of the more general category of collective identity, and as an inevitable, necessary aspect of any collective action.

National Identity

Each individual member of a national group carries national identity. Thereby national identity becomes a property of that group and as such also a collective phenomenon. This impacts on conflict behavior, as those forming a nation are ready to pursue the interests of the national group and to engage in costly and self-sacrificial actions around that perception (Kelman, 1978: 169).

National identity is often perceived as a given, but is like any other collective identity socially constructed. A group forms a nation not because of sovereign state borders or outside designation but because it perceives itself as such. According to Kelman, a group has acquired a sense of national identity if its members "[…] have come to see themselves as constituting a unique, identifiable entity, with a claim to continuity over time, to unity across

geographical distance, and to the right to various forms of self-expression […] (1997: 171).

The formation of national identity draws on a variety of authentic elements held in common within a group, like a common origin, relation to a homeland, language, or religion; it also draws on common customs, cultural expressions, experiences, values, grievances and aspirations. These elements are captured in a nation's narrative, the story (or hi*story*) a nation tells of itself. A narrative provides a group with an explanation of their positive sense of self and of belongingness, as well as of their distinctiveness with regard to other groups. National narratives justify a group's claims to ownership of the land they inhabit or perceive as their homeland, as well as the right to exert control over that land's resources.

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as in other protracted ethno-national conflicts, the clashing narratives of the two peoples nurture hostilities. The distinct Palestinian national identity as well as the distinct Israeli identity began to form at approximately the same time. The two communities lived the same events and yet experienced them in a completely different way (PRIME, 2003/2006).[5] As conflict between the two communities began to escalate at the same time as their national narratives were formed, they were built on a reservoir of reference to the parties' conflicting identities.

Israeli National Identity

Israeli national identity began to form as an answer to the rising of hostilities and persecutions against European and Russian Jews during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. After the painful experience of the violent Russian progroms between 1881 and 1882 and the Dreyfus affair in 1894, the conviction within Jewish communities in different parts of the world grew, that Jewish national identity could only be expressed in a separate

homeland. Such convictions fueled support for emigration to Palestine. Most of the early settlers, who joined a small existing Jewish community called the Yishuv, had few political ambitions (Gerner, 1991: 12-13).

Distinct political Jewish nationalism, known as Zionism, grew from the efforts of Theodor Herzl. His book "The Jewish State" published in 1896 in Vienna, Austria, became a manifesto for the new movement. Herzl stated that Jews are one people entitled to a separate state. The First Zionist Congress held in 1897 in Basel, Switzerland, was a landmark event for the establishment of modern Jewish nationalism. The majority of the 200 delegates, mainly Russians and Eastern Europeans, voted in favor of Palestine as the most appropriate site for a Jewish state. Simultaneously, the World Zionist Organization was established in order to facilitate the spread of Zionist ideas and the migration of Jews to Palestine (Tessler, 1994: 53ff.).

The idea to establish a Jewish home in Palestine responded to the Jewish narrative encapsulating a strong religious and spiritual tie to Jerusalem and its surrounding areas. The concept of the Jewish return to the *Promised Land* had been embedded in religious liturgy and traditions ever since the destruction of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E. and the expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem in the second century C.E.

The first wave of immigrants after the First Zionist Congress, called the first aliyah, was rather small. The new settlers integrated well into the indigenous Palestinian community without causing any difficulties, except among the Palestinian peasants, who lost their traditional right to sharecrop land owned by Zionist immigrants. The ethic of egalitarianism led to the insistence that only Jewish labor could be employed on lands owned by Jews. Only the immigrants from the second and third aliyah, who arrived in Palestine between 1904 and 1923, were explicitly interested in establishing a Jewish state, rather than coexisting with Arab communities. They eventually formed

the backbone of the Jewish peasant and working class in Palestine and served as the foundation of the Jewish Labor movement.

The Balfour Declaration, a letter that Lord Balfour, the British Minister of Foreign Affairs, sent to Lord Rothschild, a leader of the Jewish community in Great Britain, represented support for the establishment of a Jewish national home in the area.

With fascism rising in Central Europe, immigration increased and dramatically peaked between 1931 and 1935. This massive influx was one of the main factors that triggered the Palestinian Revolt lasting from 1936 to 1939. By 1939, the Jewish population in Palestine had risen to 31 percent, a dramatic increase from 17 percent in 1931 (Timm, 1998: 348). The new immigrants fleeing economic collapse were hostile to the egalitarian socialism of the early colonial settlers, which caused considerable friction between Jewish communities.

Many new immigrants brought financial resources to invest in industries and shops. Also, the Zionist movement mobilized financial and moral support through, for example, the Jewish National Fund to purchase land, the Jewish Foundation Fund to finance agricultural activities, and the Jewish Agency to manage the governance of the Jewish community in Palestine, encourage immigration, and raise money for settlements.

Jewish populations grew around Jaffa, Jerusalem, Haifa and Ramlah. The settlers in these areas spoke modern Hebrew and established separate Jewish schools and universities as well as hospitals, banks, civil courts, the General federation of Labor and a defense force. Supported by British officials, state building activities took form. Representatives from the various Jewish groups formed the Assembly of the Elected, who established the National Council designed to exercise decision-making within the Jewish community in Palestine.

After the Second World War and the atrocity of the Holocaust, the quest for a Jewish state gained momentum. Britain refused the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine and turned the matter over to the United Nations. On November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly approved Resolution 181 calling for the establishment of two independent states in Palestine.

The Jewish community was overjoyed by this opportunity to express their national identity through the formation of a state. Their joy was crushed by a civil war that broke out shortly afterward. During the war the Haganah, the military organization of the Yishuv that had been established during the 1920s and had grown to a unit of 20'000 soldiers, began to deport Palestinians. There was no orchestrated plan or high-level political order to do so, but military commanders were given freedom to act as they saw fit. In the Israeli view, Palestinians fled because they were generally scared and feared possible deportation (PRIME, 2006: 25)

Israelis call the war in 1948, the war of independence because the Jewish community attained independence, when in May 1948 David Ben Gurion announced the establishment of the state of Israel. The newly founded state was immediately invaded by the neighboring Arab states. By January 1949 the Israeli Defense Force had defeated its Arab neighbors and held its first elections for their parliament, the Knesset.

Palestinian National Identity

Palestinian identity originated with the general movement of Arab nationalism, which mostly took hold in the Levant (the eastern Mediterranean region) at the same time that ideas of a Zionist state emerged. Arab nationalism built on a shared language, culture and history as well as on inhabiting their homelands for hundreds of years. The influence of western nationalist ideas as well as the desire to replace Turkish Ottoman rule with local Arab political

control led the general sense of shared Arab identity to be expressed in more explicit nationalistic form. By 1880, a movement emerged that was based in Damascus and Beirut, which demanded the independence of the Levantine Arabs from the Turks. The movement's political agenda included achieving independence for Syria in union with Lebanon, the recognition of Arabic as an official language, the removal of the censorship and restrictions on the freedom of expression and the diffusion of knowledge, as well as the employment of locally recruited units on local military service only (Gerner, 1991).

When the Ottoman Empire crumbled and the Levant was divided into areas of French and British control, Arab hopes of a Greater Syria were quashed and a separate Palestinian national identity began to flourish. Distinct Palestinian nationalism was surely shaped by the Zionist challenge, anti-Zionist sentiments were more widely expressed and linked with Arab and Palestinian nationalism. Palestinian national identity did, however, by no means result mainly as a response to Zionism, but just as much from the rebellion against British authority and the realization that Syria and Iraq would neglect the protection of Palestinian national rights over their own interests, as from resistance to Zionism (Khalidi, 1997: 20).

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Palestinians found themselves in the midst of colonial rivalry. By 1907, Britain had formed a committee of seven European countries to oversee matters in the region. They submitted a report stating that the Arab countries and the Muslim-Arab people living in the Ottoman Empire represented a real threat to European countries and recommended to promote disintegration and fight any kind of unity among the region's inhabitants. The report further called for the establishment of a buffer state in Palestine. A state populated by people hostile to their neighbors and friendly to European countries.

The British played a double game. While exchanging letters with Sharif Hussein of Mecca about recognizing independence of the region, Britain secretly signed the Sykes-Picot Agreement with France to divide the Arab East. When the Balfour Declaration summed up British efforts a year later, for Palestinians it represented a convergence of British colonial interests and Zionist aspirations, as a Jewish state in Palestine offered Great Britain an opportunity to protect their strategic and economic interests in the Middle East (PRIME, 2006: 1ff.).

In December 1920, the Third Palestinian Arab Congress formulated a statement containing their aspiration to achieve independence from British control. The British refused to recognize the statement as well as any subsequent documents delivered by the Palestinians. The Third Congress also created the Arab Executive, an elected body consisting of nine Christian and Muslim members, with the purpose of conducting political activities on behalf of the Congress between its meetings. The Arab executive was headed by a member of the influential Husseini family, who also had a dominant role in the Arab Congress and the newly formed Supreme Muslim Council throughout the first half of the 1920s.

The Husseini family met political opposition in the Nashashibi family, who launched the Palestinian Arab National party in November 1923. The Nashashibi faction included landowners and wealthy businesspeople. During the 1920s and 1930s, they called for a British friendly policy aiming at cooperation without full independence. The Nashashibi movement increased its political influence over time and managed to insert their representatives into the Arab Executive and the Congress. This coalition held for several years and allowed the Palestinians as a unified body to contract with the British rulers (Krämer, 2002: 254ff.).

In 1928, the Seventh Congress convened to institute a number of permanent committees and pass a resolution calling for the establishment of parliamentary government and a representative council to govern Palestine. While Palestinian political expression gained momentum, Jewish immigration to Palestine constantly increased and the Zionist movement grew stronger. Palestinians feared that Zionism would be detrimental to their nascent Palestinian nationalist aspirations.

Due to a high level of distrust and fear between its constituents, Zionism and Palestinian nationalism were on a collision course, resulting in several confrontations precipitated alternately by Zionists and Palestinians alike. Among them were the Wailing Wall riots in August 1929, triggered by the issue of access to the Western Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem. For Muslims, the wall forms part of the Hara-al Sharif, the third holiest site in Islam, and the location of the Dome of the Rock and al-Asqa mosque. For Jews, it is an equally sacred place being part of the ancient wall surrounding the area on which Solomon and Herod built their temples.

Rebellion against Zionist manifestation accelerated the process of Palestinian political and national development. By 1935, there were six political parties vying for support. These included the National Defense party of the Nashashibis; the Palestine Arab party of the Husseini family; the Youth Congress, organized by Muslim Palestinians in 1932; Istiqlal, a branch of the pan-Arab Independence party that was supported primarily by young professional elites and called for the independence of all Arab countries; as well as two locally based Reform party and the National Bloc of Abdal-Latif Saleh. The Reform party headed by Hussein Khalidi was allied with the Palestine Arab party, while the National Bloc was a rival of the Husseini family.

The Palestinian community, particularly the peasants, suffered difficult years during the 1930s and exerted tremendous pressure on the political parties. As a result of economic hardship, large numbers of Palestinians were forced to sell their land. Due to the policy of exclusive Hebrew labor, Palestinian peasants were not hired to farm and forced to move to urban areas where it was not easy to find work either. The Palestinian economy in urban centers further declined because Jewish immigrants would not buy from Palestinian shops, use their seaport, or hire them as workers. This contributed to the fragmentation of traditional Palestinian society and increased hostility towards the Zionists, who were portrayed as the cause of these problems.

In 1936 the longest sustained protest against Jewish national aspirations – prior to the establishment of the Israeli state – started with the Palestinian Revolt and lasted until 1939. The upheaval was not politically orchestrated; it constituted a response by the population to continued Jewish immigration. The first stage of the revolt consisted mainly of a six-month period of strikes, nonpayment of taxes, and other forms of civil disobedience vis-à-vis Britain. It was terminated at the request of Arab leaders who encouraged Palestinians to wait for the outcome of the British Peel Commission's investigation of the situation.

The resulting report proposed in 1937 to partition Palestine into two states, answering to the competing claims of the two national groups. This sparked the second stage of the revolt resulting in complete turmoil in the region with Zionist, Palestinian and British forces fighting for control. In many areas the British civil authorities lost all ability to manage the day-to-day affairs of the population, as the Palestinians had established many elements of an autonomous government. In order to restore their control, the British sent in over 20'000 troops, imposed emergency regulations, expelled or imprisoned all significant Palestinian leaders and demolished homes of suspected activists. By

spring of 1939 the revolt had been crushed after killing 101 British soldiers, 463 Jews and probably up to 5000 Palestinians (Gerner, 1991: 26-28).

After the core of the Palestinian national movement had been eliminated, the Arab Higher Committee was reconstituted in 1945. Again, the Husseini family dominated the Committee and was unable to gain the support of other political parties, which resented the Husseinis' control. The lack of a unified political organization greatly hindered the manifestation of Palestinian nationalism and the fulfillment of their desire for self-determination.

For the Palestinians the UN partition plan gave way to the "An-Nakbeh", the catastrophe, which dispersed Palestinians throughout the world, reduced the remaining population by half and has continued to cause their national suffering until today. According to Palestinians, the catastrophe was the result of continual subjugation, killing, executions, arrests, exile, and conspiracy – international and Arab – against their nation (PRIME, 2006: 25). Within the borders of the land defined as the Palestinian state by the UN partition plan, 418 Palestinian villages were destroyed and many of its inhabitants killed in brutal massacres. The terror forced many families to flee. After the war Palestinians had nowhere to go, as Israeli villages had been built on the remains of their homes.

Notes

[1] The distinction between I and Me was introduced by William James in Principles of Psychology (New York: Dover Publications, 1950), 371ff. James called the I the thought that contemplates the Me, which is a collection of memories and an empirical aggregate of things that we objectively know.

[2] For an overview of the development of object-relations theory see Rubin Blanck and Gertrude Blanck in *Jenseits der Ich-Psychologie* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1998), 15-39.

[3] Freud cited by William Bloom in *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 28.

[4] Here I draw on the excellent elaboration of Piaget's social-cognitive development stages by Kurt R. Spillmann and Kati Spillmann in „Feindbilder: Entstehung, Funktion und Möglichkeiten ihres Abbaus," *Zürcher Beiträge zur Sicherheitspolitik und Konfliktforschung* 12 (1989), 21-23. See also Dieter Geulen (ed.), *Perspektivenübernahme und soziales Handeln* (Frankfurt am Main, D: Suhrkamp, 1982), 230-237.

[5] PRIME stands for Peace Research Institute in the Middle East, initiated and headed by the Palestinian Professor Sami Adwan and the Israeli Professor Dan Bar-On. PRIME launched a curriculum development project in 2002 with the aim to produce a joint history booklet for Israeli and Palestinian schools. Teams of Palestinian and Israeli teachers and historians have developed parallel historical narratives of their communities and tested their use in both communities' classrooms. Unlike other projects that focus on revising existing texts, the project is designed to produce new accounts and expose students in each community to the other's historical narrative of the same events. Thereby students can not only learn what has shaped their own community's understanding of historical events, but also get to know the historical perspective and the context that has influenced the other community's sense of reality. The project's goal is not to produce a single historical narrative that is shared by both, but to develop multiple narratives of events that reflect how, even within each community, people have different views of their region's history. Thereby the project hopes to break down stereotypes and build a more nuanced understanding of what has led to the deeply entrenched and polarized attitudes on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

3 The Identity Factor and Conflict Resolution

Identity has a decisive relevance with regard to conflict resolution. Identity impacts directly on how individuals and groups behave in conflict situations as it encompasses a sense of psychological, social and also physical security. Terrell Northrup defines the dynamic of identity as "the tendency of human beings, individually and in groups, to establish, maintain, and protect a sense of self-meaning, predictability, and purpose" (1989: 63). As identity equals a sense of self in relation to the world, it provides us with the ability to predict how our behavior will affect others and their reactions towards us.

A threat to that sense of navigation causes immense existential fear and a general breakdown of our ability to function. A threat to identity can occur in the form of denied political participation, denied enactment of customs, language and religion, as well as forced prioritization of one identity allegiance or an annihilation of one identity layer.

If not challenged, different identity layers, which may at times be contradictory, coexist without causing difficulties within an individual. In a conflict the pressure to prioritize one of our allegiances over all others or to give up on one of them is experienced as a loss of other or even all vital attachments. Amin Maalouf explains that, although our identity is multi-layered, it is also singular in the sense that we experience it as a complete whole. If one constituent element of our identity is threatened, we feel that our whole existence is endangered (2000: 22).

If our identity is threatened, psychic or even physical annihilation can seem to be imminent. Annihilation here is to be understood not only in the sense of “causing a person to cease to exist” but also as “reducing a person to nothing” and as “destroying the substance or force of a person" (Northrup, 1989: 65). In this sense an injury to our identity can be experienced as a fear of

continued but meaningless and powerless existence, which is a torturing psychological state that is at least as important to our sanity as a physical threat.

In response to a threat of identity loss we react by mobilizing resources to protect our sense of self. Identity protecting mechanisms follow a reverse order of our emotional and social-cognitive development. Our identity structure is no longer open to refinement and expansion. The capacity to take in new information gradually diminishes. Existing beliefs about the self, others and the world become frozen and extremely resistant to change. The frozen beliefs act as a stabilizing mechanism that moves us from a felt experience of disintegration to one where we are psychologically integrated and balanced again. As a consequence, the ability to communicate, to hear what an opponent is saying, or to adopt a different perspective becomes exceedingly limited.

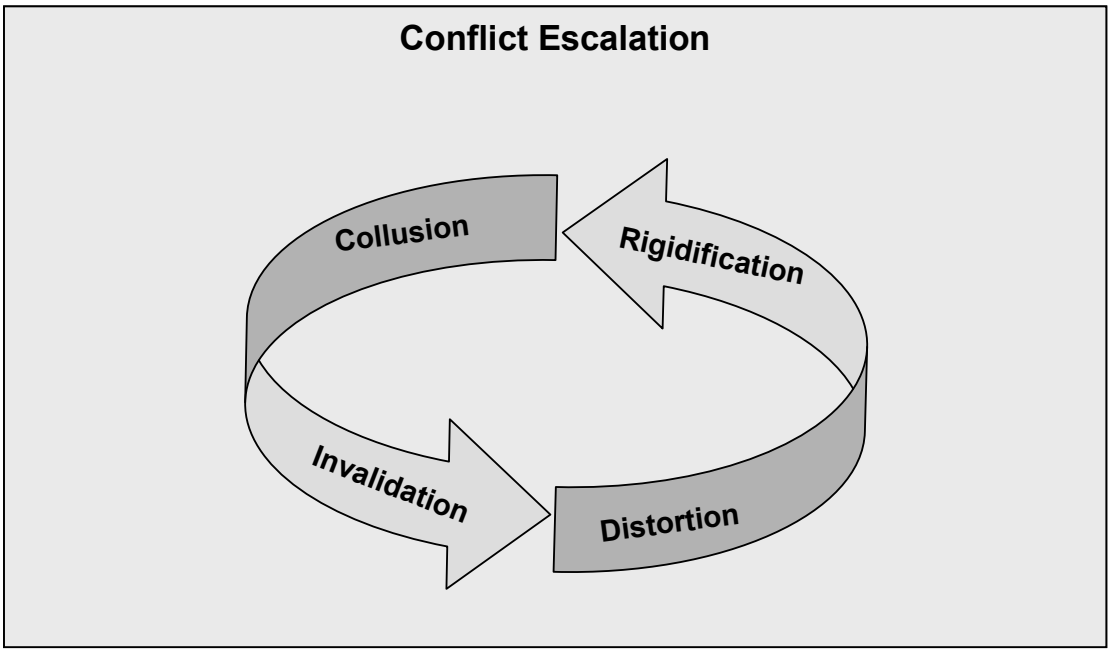
The same is true for group or social identity. A threat to group identity, just like a threat to personal identity, can take the form of a loss or the fear of a loss of something that constitutes group identity. Group members may react individually or collectively to threatening socio-political changes. Members of an identity group may synthesize a new identification or bolster the old one. How a group reacts to a shared identity threat depends on how the group as a whole perceives and defines the nature of the crisis. If a group identity factor, such as ethnicity, is core to the sense of self of a group of individuals, the process of mobilizing resources to protect that sense of self can occur as a group phenomenon.

The methodology of IPS employs insight about the impact of the identity factor on conflict behavior. As a threat to identity impairs identity formation mechanisms that account for cooperative behavior, the methodology aims at restoring the workability of identity formation mechanisms. The method gradually evolved from social-psychological concepts over a problem-

solving approach towards adopting process-elements of the identity factor to form a methodology of identity negotiation.

Impact of the Identity Factor on Conflict Escalation

For the purpose of comprehending and in a next step evaluating how IPS can restore identity formation mechanisms and account for a process of negotiating identity aspects, it is necessary to understand how elements of the identity forming process can spiral conflict escalation. Terrell Northrup describes four psychological processes inherent to the identity factor that escalate conflict behavior. They include threat of invalidation, distortion, rigidification and collusion (1989: 68).



First, the dynamic of identity formation can cause conflict if an event occurs in the course of a relationship between individuals or groups that is perceived as invalidating the core sense of identity of one or of several parties involved. The invalidation of a party's core construct is experienced as

threatening because it destroys the meaning of who they are as well as the ability to predict events. In this conflict phase we fall back into the second stage of our cognitive development in which we are unable to take the viewpoints of others into account with regard to our own behavior.

The intensity of a conflict will be particularly high in the case where identities of two groups invalidate each other, as it is the case in the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Many members of both parties believe that their own existence is threatened by the mere existence of the other. This is especially clear in relation to territorial claims. Both groups associate their sense of identity with the same land. Each side affirms that in order for them to maintain their identity they must live on and cultivate the same piece of land, which represents their meaning as a national group and their religious ties. Loss of that land, or the threat of its loss or of not obtaining it, means more than the fact of the loss of territory. It implies the loss of self and psychic annihilation. Davidson and Montville state that: "each side perceives the fulfillment of the other's national identity as equivalent to the destruction of its own identity" (1981/82: 153). Thus, each is reluctant to accept the other's right to a state expressing national identity. To do so would be to participate in a process imperiling one's own national existence. Therefore, unless each side is assured that its own national existence is secure, neither can be expected to make a move to accept the other.

Second, the dynamic of identity can cause conflict if parties react to a threat of invalidation with distortion (Northrup, 1989: 69). This implies that incoming information is misperceived and distorted in order to maintain the core sense of identity. Distorting incoming information means that the one receiving a piece of information perceives it in a way that is inconsistent with reality and transforms this information into something that suits his, or her, own perception of things. This psychological response can be qualified as

aggressive because an individual or group of individuals seeks to force a meaning onto the invalidating event, for the purpose of making it seem validating. Our reaction pattern here corresponds to the first level of our cognitive development, in which our own perspective – and only our own perspective – equals reality.

Third, the dynamic of identity formation exacerbates conflict, as distorted views of events accumulate and form increasingly impermeable constructs. That is to say, parties engaged in conflict develop increasingly rigid interpretations of the world; this is why Northrup calls this process rigidification (1989: 70ff.). The psychological process that is at work here is directed at putting a distance between the self and the threat by separating the „invalidated" party from the „invalidating" one. As this process continues, more and more characteristics about the other party that have been perceived as „like self" become threatening and are re-construed as being different from the self. This leads to a clear-cut perception of the self and the other.

The perceived threat of core identity invalidation, leads to rigidification of the clear-cut pictures of self and other, because the fear of losing our identity leads us to shut down our learning channels. In other words, new information that could make the in-group discover that the out-group has „like-self" characteristics, is aggressively distorted, or simply not heard and seen (because they fall out of the „reality" constructs of the self or the in-group, as in the late stages of our emotional development).

A further important aspect of rigidly construed conflict perception is that not only behavior and demands of the opponent party are perceived as threatening, but also beliefs and characteristics not related to the original threat. This aggravates conflicts and makes their resolution very difficult.

Parallel to the process of rigidification, the process of projection occurs, the mechanism that accounts for the creation of the enemy image. In a stage of

conflict where we feel that the integrity of our self is threatened and a certain hardening of conflict perception has taken place, we start to project parts of our self that we dislike onto the other and construe them as non-self qualities. The other, or the relationship to the other, serves to bring out some of the negative elements of our own identity, which we want to overcome or deny.

In a protracted conflict two types of negative identity elements are often brought to the fore by the relationship to the other: the view of one's own self as weak and vulnerable, and the view of one's self as violent and unjust (Kelman, 1999: 593). In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict such negative identity elements consist of the view of the self as victim and victimizer. At the level of political rhetoric each party claims the status of victim and each denies the role of victimizer. At the level of self-esteem, however, both of these elements are negative and ego-alien and, therefore, difficult to accept. This presents an obstacle to conflict resolution efforts, as it is necessary to accept one's own weakness and error for the purpose of developing cooperative relations with an opponent. For example, to acknowledge the other's rights, may necessitate admitting unjust behavior towards the other.

As a consequence of rigidification and projection, differences between conflict parties are exaggerated while differences within each party are minimized. During this conflict phase we find ourselves thrown back to the third stage of our emotional development and react again like the infant who builds separate categories of experiences of good/bad, own/foreign, safe/threatening. Everything that we are familiar with is rated as being entirely good, of our own, and safe; while everything we do not know, is rated as being entirely bad, foreign, and threatening.

In the case of further aggravation of rigidified conflict perception, a process of deligitimization and even dehumanization develops, which portrays the other as being less valuable than the self-group. Deligitimization can install

a blatant domination-submission relationship between two conflict parties if one of them is unquestionably more powerful than the other. The dominating group portrays itself as representing the norm of what is valuable and sometimes even of what is human; while it portrays the other group as being different from that norm and therefore as being less valuable. Being excluded from the identity norm creates an unbearable situation for the dominated group as it pushes them into great uncertainty about their identity (Bar-Tal, 2000: 121-124).

Deligitimization and dehumanization increase violence, as it is easier to harm someone construed as non-self or even inhuman. Things that we would never do to those who are like us are possible to be done to someone, who has nothing to do with us and is no longer seen as human but as an object, a target, and a threat.

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict the most extreme examples of delegitimizing the other have consisted of equating Zionism with racism, and Palestinian nationalism, as represented by the PLO, with terrorism. Since racism and terrorism are morally unacceptable in human society, these designations not only deligitimize the other's national movement but even border on dehumanizing it by placing the other outside of the human community. Deligitimization announces that these national movements, and implicitly the national groups forming them, have no right to exist (Kelman, 1999: 590).

Fourth, as conflict dynamics further exacerbate, a collusion process takes hold (Northrup, 1989: 75). At this stage the behavior of conflict parties towards each other consists exclusively of hostile acts that can easily burst into violence. These acts serve to validate established distortions that actually created hostile behavior in the first place. The effect of distorting the image of the other is that they will indeed act according to that image. This leads to a

totally absurd phenomenon. Making the other group behave in a way that is consistent with the distortion provides security to the sense of identification, even though this behavior may include violent acts (and a physical threat to the existence of either group). The reason for this is that distortion is a response to the threat of invalidation of identity. The affirmation of distortion, therefore, proves that the threat to identity was successfully averted and the sense of identity is reassured. That way, the conditions of conflict become part of each conflict party's identity.

As elements of the conflict begin to define the identity of the parties, the latter start to behave in ways that are consistent with maintaining the conflict. Northrup calls this process one of collusion because conflict parties adopt a kind of cooperation in prolonging the conflict relationship (1989: 75). Collusion may manifest itself in various forms, which mostly serve the purpose of sanctifying the struggle and honoring the efforts of the respective groups. Collusion provides affirmation of self-worth and secures the sense of self or self-group. As a consequence, the initially unintended collusion may over time be manifested in formal social, political, and economic structures within and between parties. In this case we speak of an institutionalization of conflict. At this stage, elements of the conflict have become formally established parts of the identity of those in conflict. Therefore, the prospect of ending the conflict represents a threat to the sense of self of conflict parties or an invalidation of their identity. Thereby the vicious circle of conflict escalation reaches its starting point.

In order to de-escalate the conflict spiral, a conflict resolution method needs to restore, in a long step-by-step process, natural identity formation that allow a cooperative relationship. Conflict resolution must first account for a confrontation between the opponents in order to break up the negative cooperation of collusion that constantly fuels conflict. If the parties can quarrel

with each other there is contact. Exchange between the parties can bring about the possibility of giving the other a human face again and a more differentiated image. The rigid enemy images can gradually soften and the opponent can eventually be heard and understood again, while Identity threats can be deterred and the conflict spiral de-escalated.

Developing a Method to De-escalate Conflict

IPS builds on the de-escalatory effect of restored identity forming processes. It aims at negotiating identity aspects in a way that strengthens the conflict parties' sense of self and disperses identity threats. The development of IPS towards an identity management method has spanned over four decades. The method evolved from a social-psychological understanding of conflict theory, over adopting a problem-solving technique, towards integrating process-elements of identity formation.

With regard to both its conceptual foundation and its practical application IPS was predominantly influenced by the work of John W. Burton, a former diplomat from Australia. Burton started to develop an alternative conflict resolution approach in the early 1960s. Together with other social scientists he founded the Center for the Analysis of Conflict (CAC) at the University College in London (Fisher, 1997). The foundation of the center ensued from the positive experiences Burton and his colleagues had made during problem-solving discussions with representatives from Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore with regard to the conflict over Malaysia's independence (Mitchell, 2001). The pioneering endeavor showed that analytical discussions allowing parties to freely talk about conflict issues without being pressured to produce an agreement could lead to productive results. Kelman was introduced to the application of Burton's method in 1966, when he joined the panel of social scientists at the CAC to facilitate a

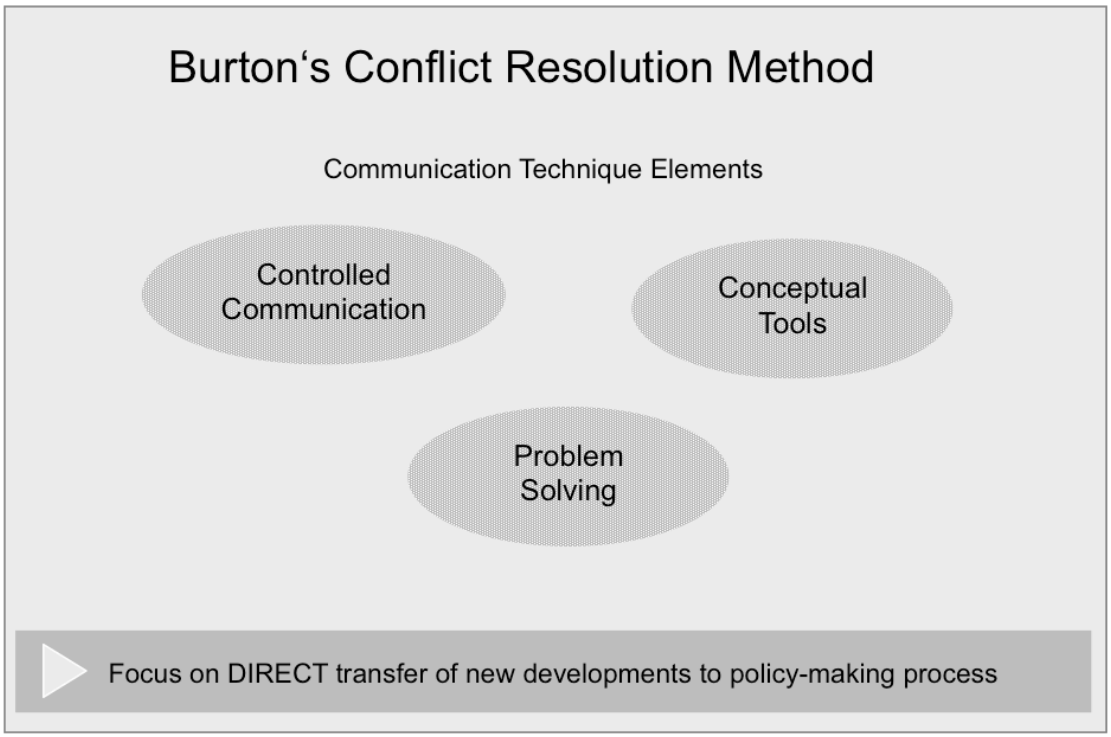
discussion between Greek and Turkish Cypriots about the future status of the Republic of Cyprus (Kelman, 1999: 2).

Controlled Communication

The aspects of Burton's method that predominantly influenced the development of IPS were the system level of its analysis and its problem-solving technique. Dissatisfied with the options official diplomacy offered to reconcile conflict parties, Burton aimed at applying social theory to intractable violent conflicts and creating new means for conflict parties to analyze their problems and develop options for solutions. Burton approached conflict analysis in a problem-solving mode, which he defined as "questioning implied assumptions, attitudes and theories, putting forward alternative hypotheses and examining these in light of events" (1979: 6). Problem solving as a method, thus, entails approaching a problem, or a given conflict, through an analysis based on new parameters that are free of existing assumptions.

In this vein, Burton and his colleagues developed a theory of practice, which consisted of a methodology that was continuously informed by actual experiences. Burton called the practical application of the methodology “controlled communication” (1969). Later on, the term was used to describe the methods first phase of communication. In total the method contained three phases, in each phase the third party had distinct facilitating tasks. Controlled communication as a methodological term did not mean that the facilitators intended to control the participants. It referred to the intent to keep the nature of the discussions on an analytic level that would allow conflict parties to stand back from adversarial positions and see their conflict as a problem to be solved.

Calling the first phase of Burton's method, *controlled communication* referred to the effort of the third party to grant each participant the possibility to describe his or her perception of the conflict.



Keeping a discussion between conflict parties on an analytic, non-polemic level proved to be quite difficult at times. For example, at the occasion of the meeting with Greek and Turkish Cypriots, the third-party members agreed to initiate the meeting by asking each side to present their view of the conflict. The aim behind a mutual presentation of perceptions was that the participants would thereby become ready to listen to each other. Contrary to these hopes, the parties got caught up in a fierce debate. To bring talks back to an analytical discussion mode the panel introduced an abstract concept: a spiral model of conflict escalation (Fisher, 1997: 25). Supported by an abstract metaphor the delegates were able to engage in a conflict analysis exercise by relating the *conceptual tool* to their specific situation. This led the participants to discover that the image each side had of the other was distorted by misperceptions. More so, they were able to retrieve some essential deep-rooted

sentiments like the need to enact their ethnic identity in a safe and autonomous way.

Burton fed these insights back into his evolving theory of practice. Consequently, the second phase of his methodology included the introduction of abstract models of conflict dynamics that would stimulate the analysis of conflict issues. This enabled participants to adopt the role of an analyst that gave them a new outlook and an alternative identity layer. During the second phase, the facilitation of the third party consisted of seeking clarification by questioning misperceptions and promoting insight by explaining processes of interactions. The role of the third-party panel also consisted of offering possible explanations of conflict causes by introducing knowledge of conflict theory into the discussion. Participants were free to choose whether or not to adopt a proposed theoretical explanation and to decide about the usefulness of conceptual tools.

In a third phase, the panel assisted conflict parties to consolidate their understandings and explore possible solutions in a problem-solving way. Burton recommended tackling conflict resolution by replacing existing assumptions with newly developed hypotheses that could be tested in light of ongoing events. Three features inhere in the problem-solving mode Burton envisioned (1979: 6). First, problem solving requires to form a new synthesis of knowledge or techniques and to adopt a changed theoretical structure. Second, it does not portray a solution to a conflict as a final product but as a forward leading process entailing further problem sets. Third, problem solving occurs in an open system. In an open system different factors have a reciprocal effect on each other. The environment in which a problem is solved has an effect on that problem, while solutions that were developed to solve the problem have an impact on the environment.

The Fermeda Workshop

A second source of inspiration for IPS stemmed from a conflict resolution effort organized by Leonard W. Doob and two of his colleagues from Yale University, which focused on border disputes in the Horn of Africa between Somalia and its two neighbors, Ethiopia and Kenya (Kelman, 1972: 172). Through a research project Doob became familiar with the lot of Somali people who were victim of a conflict that had emerged after the Republic of Somalia gained independence in 1960. The new state manifested claims over areas of Ethiopia and Kenya, which had been populated by ethnic Somali majorities and had historically belonged to Somali territory. After the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations had undertaken various unsuccessful efforts to mediate a settlement, Doob set out to build a new method to approach a resolution of the conflict.

Doob drew on findings stemming from behavioral science to develop a new methodology. The method's rationale was to overcome barriers of communication between conflict parties. For this purpose, Doob and his colleagues invited Kenyan, Ethiopian and Somali representatives to participate in a series of unstructured discussions that would be facilitated by a third party panel and held in a realm far removed from the conflict scenario. The participants would be split up into small groups in which they would be able to share how they perceive themselves and their relations to others with regard to the conflict. The method built on providing experiential learning directed toward building increased self-awareness, interpersonal effectiveness, and understanding of group processes (Doob, 1972: 683). After learning from their interaction, participants would eventually be able to apply their new insight to the development of innovative solutions to their conflict.

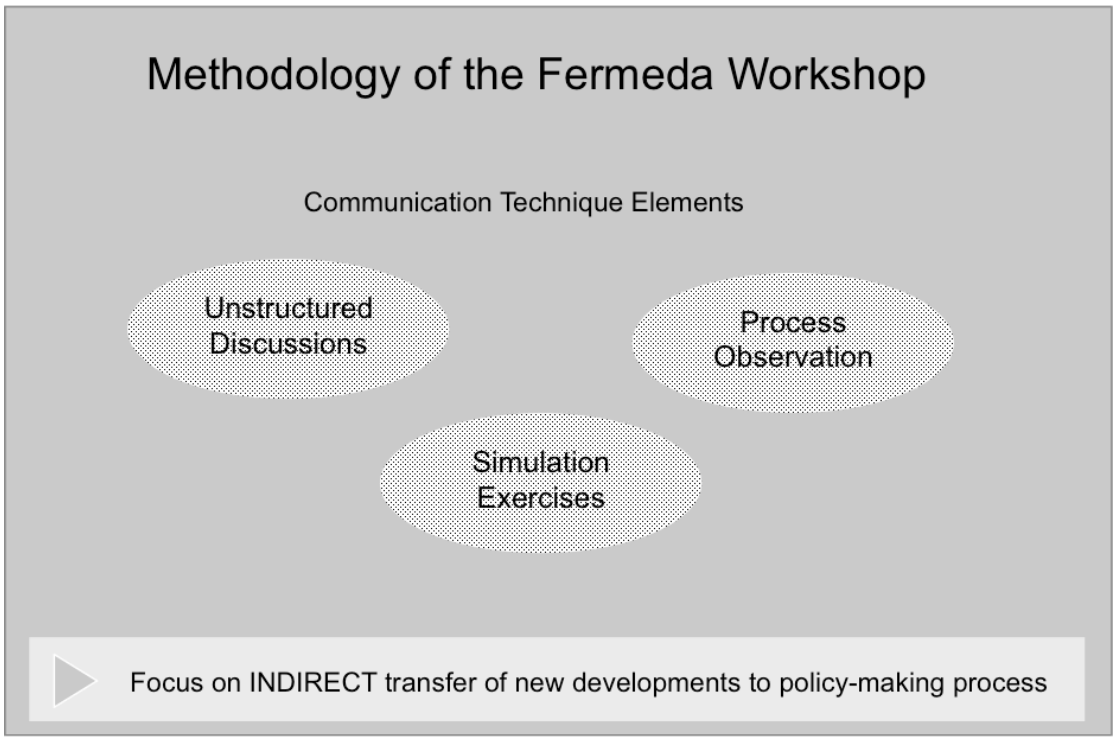
Doob and his associates had been engaged over a period of three years in gaining approval from all three governments to recruit six participants of

each country. The invitees were to have an academic background, an understanding of the situation, and an openness to change. Although they had been chosen according to their potential ability to influence the policymaking process of their countries and had received consent of their governments, participants came as private individuals and did not act as official representatives. Together with two of his colleagues and four trainers for the small-group exercises, Doob was finally able to convene a two-week meeting in a remote area in the mountains of south Tyrol in 1969. The endeavor was called "Fermeda Workshop" after the name of the hotel that hosted the meeting (Doob et al., 1969).

The meeting started with *unstructured discussions* held in small groups containing three representatives of each country, two third-party members, who would act as communication trainers, and one or two members of the organizing team. For the first few days, workshop activities focused on training sensitivity for self-awareness and open communication among the participants. Panel members *observed* and helped to interpret *group processes*. Process observation is used to illustrate how interactions between workshop participants reflect conflict dynamics of their national groups that point to underlying conflict causes. The fact that the third party only engaged in process observation but did not intervene in any other way, led to initial insecurity, anger and frustration about the lack of structure. Eventually the exchange crystallized into fruitful discussions. Conversations concentrated solely on individual and group development and did not touch on concrete conflict issues, though.

After the initial phase, the small groups started to convene in plenary sessions where the trainers introduced them to leadership styles of cooperative and competitive strategies. To illustrate the concepts, the participants were asked to take part in *simulation exercises*. Plenary session activities helped to

improve the working process of the small groups and provided tools for tackling conflict issues at a later stage.



In a second phase, the workshop finally addressed the border disputes. Each national group was asked to make a list of how it perceived its own grievances and those of the other two parties. The lists were then presented in a plenary session. The process proved to be strenuous as some participants found it difficult to identify grievances of the other conflict parties. The third party decided to reconvene in the original small groups and develop proposals to which all team members were able to agree, regardless of their nationality. When the small groups presented their results in plenary sessions, however, a joint decision could not be achieved. Confronted with their fellow nationals, participants felt constrained by their national loyalties and saw previously agreed upon solutions as being detrimental to their national cause.

The aim of the Fermeda Workshop to develop a joint proposal supported by all participants could not be met. Nonetheless, participants found that they had been able to engage in fruitful discussions with their opponents and develop a certain amount of trust towards them within the framework of the small training groups.

The Evolution of Interactive Problem Solving

In a thorough analysis Kelman compared the two approaches with the objective to further develop conflict resolution tools for dialogue workshops (1972: 175ff.). As both approaches represented exploratory exercises, their methods were open to change and recombination. Therefore, the features of the two approaches could very well be combined in a new way.

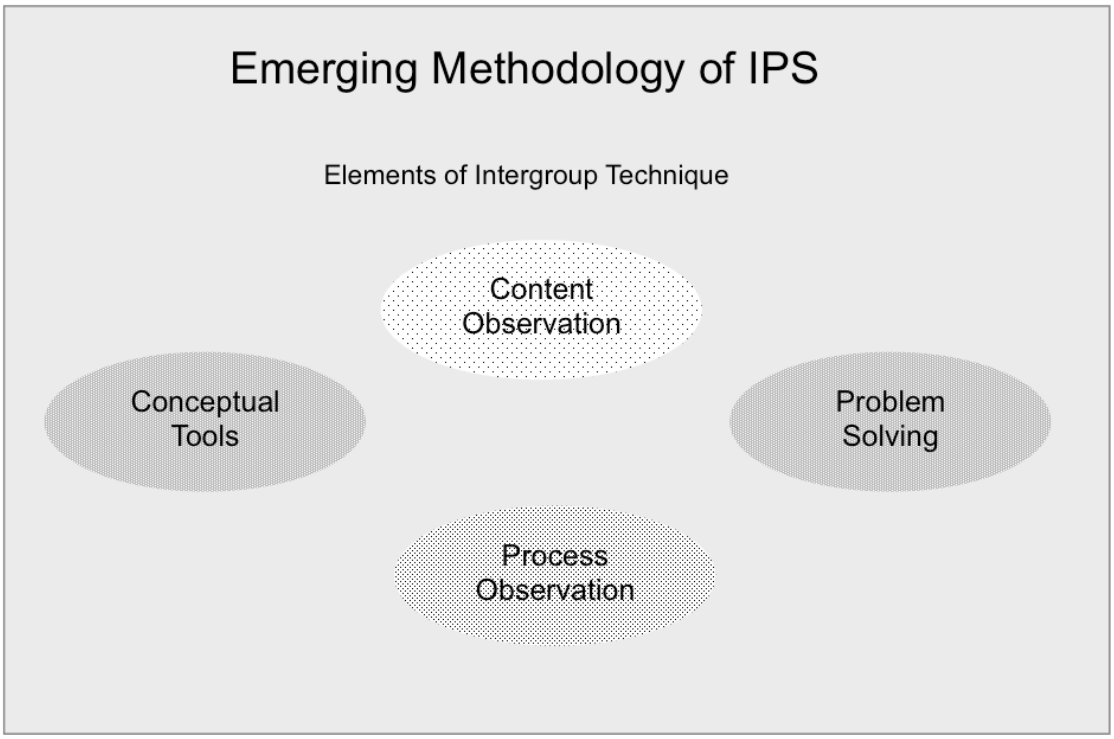
The two approaches proved to have common characteristics with regard to offering a private and even isolated setting, academic sponsorship, non-political roles of participants, an informal atmosphere, an analytic discussion format and an impartial third party.

Central to both workshops was that their applied methodology offered participants the possibility to directly communicate their perceptions, hopes and fears. Thereby they were able to develop their own new ideas without being constrained by a rigid agenda or coercive mediation. In both exercises the third party guided the discussions only by providing a range of conceptual tools, from which participants were free to choose and which enabled participants to tackle conflict issues like problems, to which creative solutions could be sought.

While the methods differed in their conception and specific tasks of the exercises, they had both been designed to enhance the probability that changed conflict perspectives and new ideas for solutions, which had been generated during the discussions, would be fed into the policy process. Features like

selection of politically influential participants and coordination with their governments had been geared to achieve this end.

Together with Stephen P. Cohen, Kelman applied the experience gained from Burton's and Doob's efforts to an exploratory workshop with the aim to evolve and evaluate intergroup techniques for conflict resolution in the workshop setting (Cohen et al. 1977: 166). They combined some of the elements, which Burton and Doob used for their communication technique. The exploratory workshop was conducted in 1971 as part of a seminar on social-psychological approaches to international relations and was not a full-scale workshop with explicit political implications.



Kelman and Cohen integrated not only the problem-solving approach to analyzing and discussing conflict issues. They also applied Burton's technique of introducing conceptual tools in the form of theoretical concepts to allow participants to move from the role of a combative representative to that of a

conflict analyst (Cohen et al. 1977: 169). This process generated an alternative identity layer. In addition to their national and ethnic identity, participants were able to develop an identity as conflict analysts. The third party chose material on issues of nationalism and national identity to provide a framework for the discussions. They introduced additional theoretical ideas to change the level of discussion or provide a different perspective when conversations reached an impasse.

Kelman and his team used small-group techniques like Doob and his colleagues had employed to generate some level of trust between conflict representatives and to provoke changes in individual behavior. Instead of focusing on interpersonal changes, the Israeli-Palestinian pilot workshop applied group intervention techniques to explore intergroup relations.

In addition to theoretical inputs and process observation, Kelman and Cohen applied content observation as an additional type of third-party intervention (1976: 86). Content observation interprets the content of what is being said by the participants to increase the understanding of both parties about assumptions and sensitivities that are contained in their statements and that point to their hidden needs and fears.

Although the pilot workshop was a limited academic exercise, it offered its organizers valuable insights that enhanced the evolution of IPS. The third party learnt a lot about impacts of the different intervention techniques. In particular, process observation interventions proved to be useful in terms of generating new insights about conflict realities to the participants.

For example, when Israelis offered advice, assistance and cooperation to Palestinians, the latter reacted with hostility and rejection of such support (Cohen et al. 1977: 184). This dynamic reflected the unequal distribution of power between the two parties and showed that the image each had of the other differed widely from the image each party had of itself. The offer of help from

a more powerful Israel reminded the Palestinians of their inferior status. The Israeli participants seemed to underestimate the intensity of the Palestinian animosity toward them. They failed to see that their offer of help would come across as an affirmation of their own superiority and as an assertion that Israel would control the future of the Palestinians.

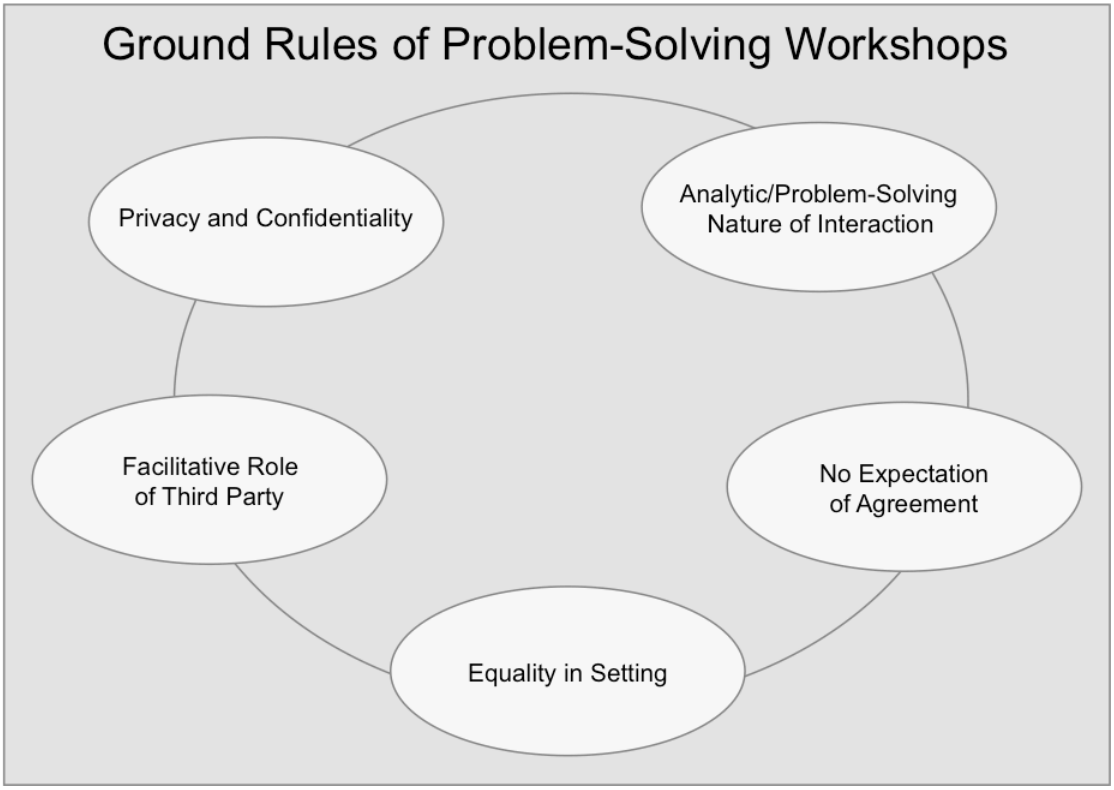
Another situation that lent itself to process observation occurred, when a Palestinian participant drew a symbol on the blackboard during a break. The symbol consisted of a cross, a crescent, and a Star of David. The Palestinian participant saw the symbol as representing his vision of a future Palestine in which Christians, Moslems, and Jews would live together in peace. The Israeli reaction to the symbol came as a complete surprise to the Palestinians. According to them the symbol represented Israel encircled by the Arab world, with a dagger piercing its heart (Cohen et al. 1977: 185).

The interactions around the described symbol demonstrated the differences in perception of the conflict parties. The firsthand experience of these divergent views showed participants what kind of effect their expectations had on their conflict perception. Moreover, it demonstrated that the intentions behind an act or a statement are not as obvious to the receiver as they are to the one emitting them. Such insight can be a necessary first step for the development of conflict solutions.

Structural Elements of Interactive Problem Solving

The valuable insights from the first interactive problem-solving workshop have been adapted to succeeding workshops. Each practical application of the method ensued in theoretical refinement of employed techniques. Most importantly, the action-research of Kelman and his team led to the realization that the workshop discussions needed to employ process-elements of identity formation to enable the negotiation of identity changes.

The present section displays the structural elements of IPS before the next section explores the conceptual elements of identity negotiation. The structural elements of IPS consist of ground rules that govern the norms of communication as well as the role of the third party, and a set agenda or discussions stages.



The ground rules of IPS are active throughout the workshop discussions. They govern the five issues that are essential to achieve effective communication. These are: privacy and confidentiality, nature of interaction, no expectation of agreement, equality in setting, and role of the third party (Kelman, 1999: 8/2000: 275).

IPS grants privacy and confidentiality. The identity of workshop participants is not made public without their consent, nor is any item of

information displayed during a workshop disclosed to the public without the consent of the participants.

The nature of interactions among participants is based on committing to a first discussion phase that focuses only on the present people without thinking about their respective constituencies. The participants' needs and fears, their priorities and constraints can best be discussed in an analytical rather than polemic way. Further, the second rule stipulates agreement among workshop participants to adopt a problem-solving approach for the analysis of conflict issues.

Participants are not expected to produce an agreement regarding definitive conflict solutions. The workshop discussions are designed to increase the participants' understanding of their diverse conflict perceptions and to develop new ideas that would ideally inspire and support an eventual resolution of the conflict without being pressured to produce a blueprint for a peace treaty.

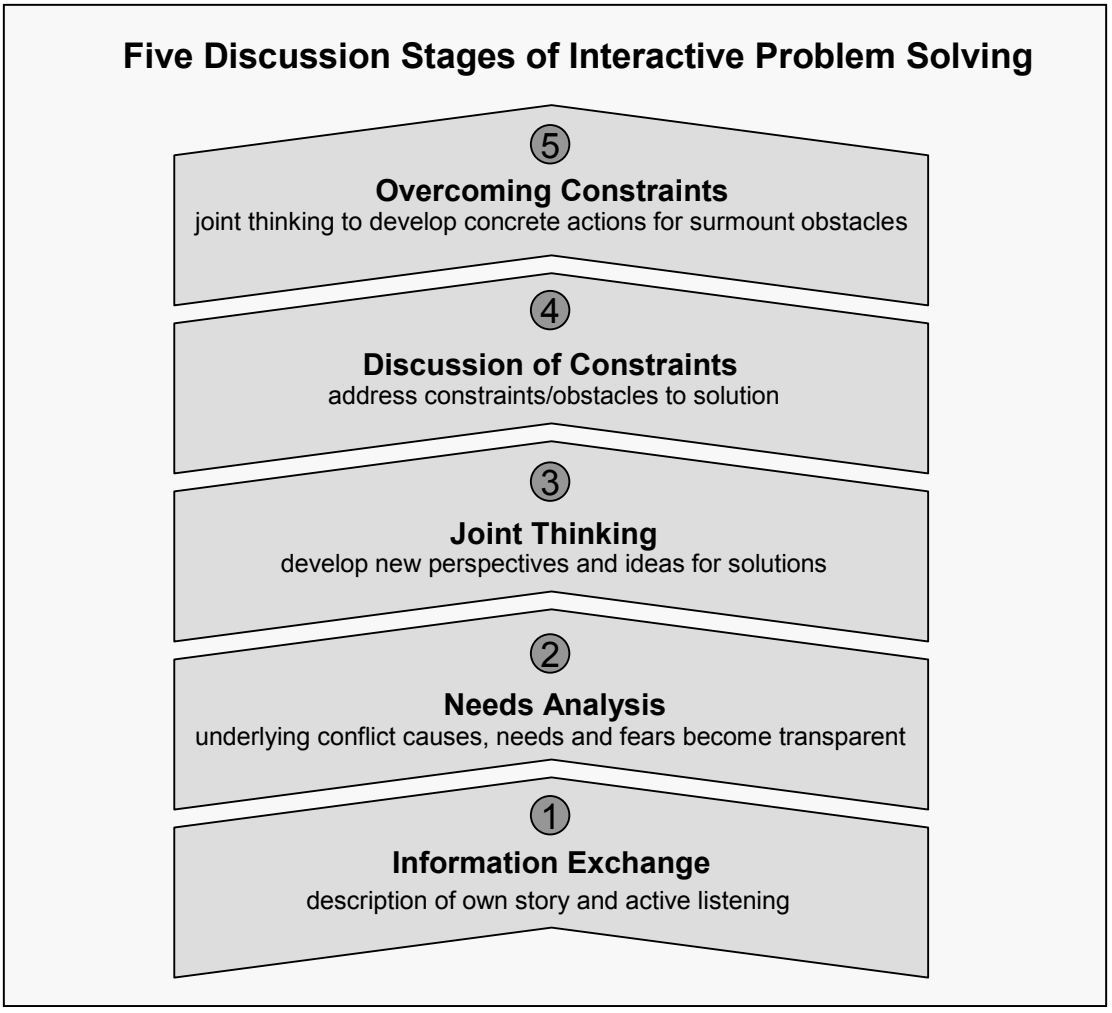
The fourth rule grants participants equality of treatment. Each participant has an equal right to speak and to be listened to and statements of each group member will be treated with equal consideration.

Third-party activity is confined to the facilitative guidance of the workshop discussions by focusing on its content, process and theoretical formulation. The third party regularly summarized the accounts of participants, asking for clarifications, or highlighting shared views. The third party only stops the discussions if they become polemic, contributes if discussions reach a deadlock, or channels confrontations between participants. The third party exercises great caution about the timing and relevance of their intervention. A third-part intervention can only be successful if the participants are ready for it. The rule further entails that the third party abstains from exerting pressure of any kind to produce consensus, from offering advice, and from making proposals regarding possible conflict solutions. The third party does not take

sides or arbitrate between different interpretations of historical facts or international law.

Once the third party has communicated the ground rules during pre-workshop sessions – held with each party separately – and/or in the process of recruiting participants, workshop discussions start with both parties present. Workshop discussions are structured into five stages. (Kelman, 2000: 277)

During the first discussion stage, each conflict party is asked to separately describe conflict issues as perceived within their communities while the other party only listens or asks for clarifications.



At the second stage each side is asked to discuss their central concerns with regard to the conflict, to elaborate what they think are existential fears and fundamental needs of their community members that need to be met. Only after each group has demonstrated that they significantly understand the concerns and requirements voiced by their opponent the discussion moves on to the next stage.

During the third discussion phase new conflict perceptions can be developed and ideas elaborated for working out possible approaches to resolve the conflict that meet both parties' needs. For this purpose participants are asked to engage in an interactive process of *joint thinking* through which each party can share propositions of how to meet not only their own needs but also those of the other side.

If common ground can be reached during the third phase, the discussion can move on to the fourth level at which political and psychological constraints can be identified. Such constraints may consist of objections occurring within the respective communities toward proposed steps for changing the status quo.

At the fifth and final stage the parties should jointly develop ways to overcome the identified obstacles to proposed solutions and develop concrete measures, which their societies and they themselves could undertake to overcome barriers to negotiating mutually satisfactory solutions.

Conceptual Elements of Interactive Problem Solving

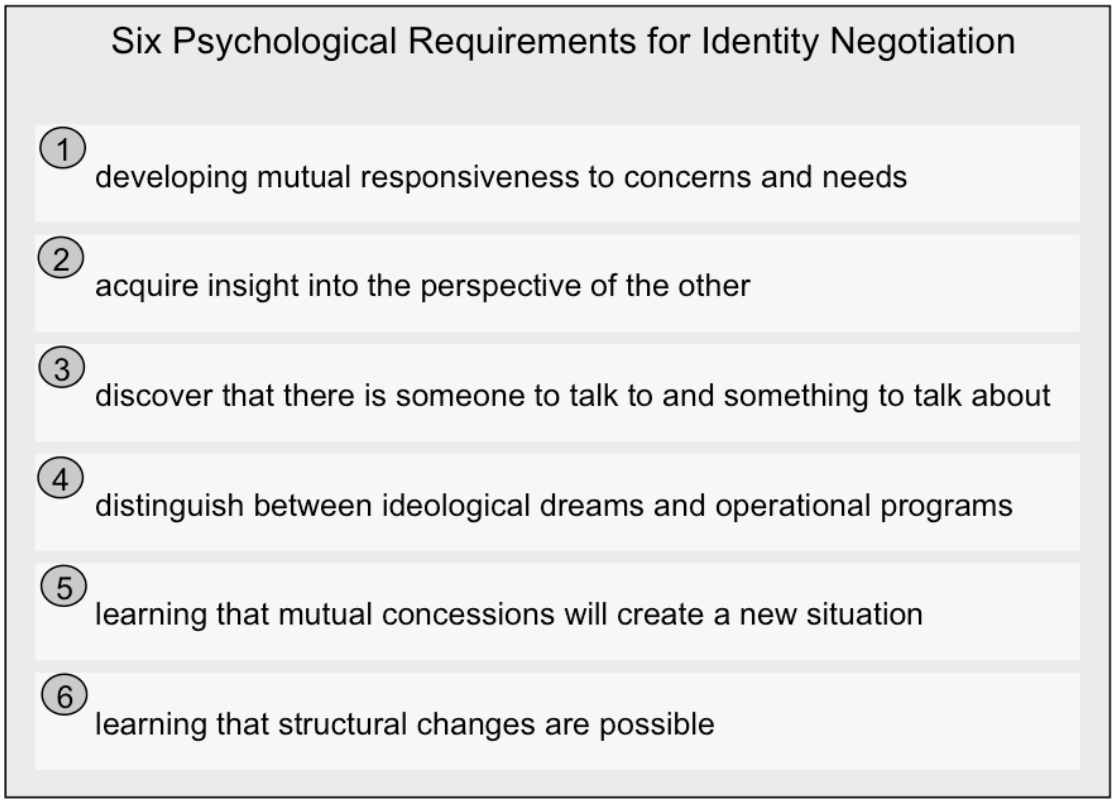
I ascribe the conceptual development of IPS to descriptions of social-psychological processes found in early publications of Kelman (1958, 1965), where he examines how social-psychological developments account for the occurrence as well as for the sustainability of change in social communities and illustrates the relevance of social psychology for the study of conflict.

The understanding that identity aspects have a negotiable quality can be linked to two assumptions: that identity is to a large part socially constructed and to Burton's understanding that psychological needs, like identity, security, or recognition are not inherently zero-sum (1988). Kelman has expanded on Burton's notion that one party need not gain its identity or sense of security at the expense of the other, by formulating that the sense of identity is not only left intact by the mutual acknowledgement of each other's national existence, but that the expression of certain changed identity elements reinforce, rather than threaten the core of the parties' identities (Kelman, 1987: 358).

Kelman first referred to the method's conceptual content as "the negotiation of identity", ascribing the term to his colleague Stephen Cohen (Kelman, 1979: 104). IPS proposes that certain psychological conditions are necessarily required for participants to engage in a dialogue that entails a discussion and really a negotiation of aspects of their national identity (Kelman, 1978: 162-186).

The first requirement entails that both sides make the effort to explain their view in a way that the other can understand, and actively listen to what the other tries to say. Thereby the parties develop responsiveness to the opponents concerns. Such responsiveness needs to be reinforced by mutual gestures of reassurance. Each party must be willing not only to offer gestures to the other, but also to communicate what gestures from the other would be meaningful to them. Thereby the second prerequisite is met and each side can acquire insight into the perspective of the other.

At this level, both sides can learn what gave rise to the other's positions, interests, needs and concerns. By understanding the motivations of the other, each party will be able to make sense of the other's reluctance to accept one's own point of view and will discover that there is someone to talk to and something to talk about.



In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict it has generally been assumed that there is no one to talk to on the other side. The reason for this, besides the lack of trust, is that those on the adversary side, who showed readiness to participate in talks, are dismissed as non-representative. Generally, those willing to listen and even make suggestions for changing the status quo are not seen as being able to implement the suggested changes because they lack the necessary political influence. Further, Israeli and Palestinians have presumed that even if there would be someone to talk to, there would be nothing to talk about, because the demands of the two sides have been viewed as being mutually exclusive. Also, each side is used to thinking that the opponent's goal in an eventual negotiation would be to discuss their own surrender.

Acceptance of the idea that a dialogue about substantial issues is possible requires a differentiated view of the other side, which entails the

fourth prerequisite of distinguishing between ideological dreams and operational programs.

Ideological dreams refer to old ritualized myths. These dreams are important in terms of maintaining a community's cohesion and ideological elements may be reiterated as rhetorical instruments in frustrating conflict situations. Ideological remnants of each group's historical narrative have, however, in most cases been abandoned and are not likely to become part of the two political communities' operational programs, that is their political agenda that each party intends to follow. Old beliefs may remain in the collective conscience of a group but do no longer determine the actions of that group. For mutual acceptance to occur, it is vital that both sides learn to distinguish between the elements of the opponent's ideology that are mere components of political rhetoric and those that actually form part of the political agenda determining current decision making.

For Israelis and Palestinians new convictions have become operational over time. However, both sides still need to be convinced that this is the case. The difficulty that needs to be overcome is that both sides know that one set of ideological beliefs is not just replaced with another and that myths and dreams associated with their historical narrative are not easily abandoned. However, both sides also experienced how new beliefs evolved that made old myths irrelevant in terms of political goals. If both sides share the experience that new and sometimes even contradictory ideological principles can exist alongside of old ones, the distinction between ideological dreams and operational programs becomes easier to draw.

The acceptance of the opponent's new political agenda implies a move towards the other and leads to the fifth prerequisite that each side must be persuaded that mutual concessions will create a new situation, setting a process of change into motion. Parties in conflict tend to underestimate the prospect for

change in the future. They anticipate that the other side aims at keeping the status quo and will replicate its past actions in the future. Doing so, they disregard any new element that might enter the equation including their own respective actions. This obstructs readiness to concede to the demands of the other.

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict both sides have a fixed and outdated perception of each other and their respective position with regard to the conflict. Over time, positions on each side changed considerably. Palestinians and Israelis both perceive their own changes as drastic, while they perceive the changes of the other side as either non-existent or as being unauthentic.

It is very difficult for each side to imagine how their own enormous catharsis could pass as unperceived or as negligibly small by the other side. The reason for this asymmetry of perception is that both evaluate the changes that occurred on the other side in terms of the extent to which they did or did not bring them closer to their own preferred positions and not in terms of the difficulties that had to be overcome to achieve the changes. Only if each side comes to understand how important the achieved changes are to the other side, and how strenuous it was for the members of their community to achieve those changes, both can gain trust to believe these changes to be real and link necessary concessions on their part to the implementation of those changes.

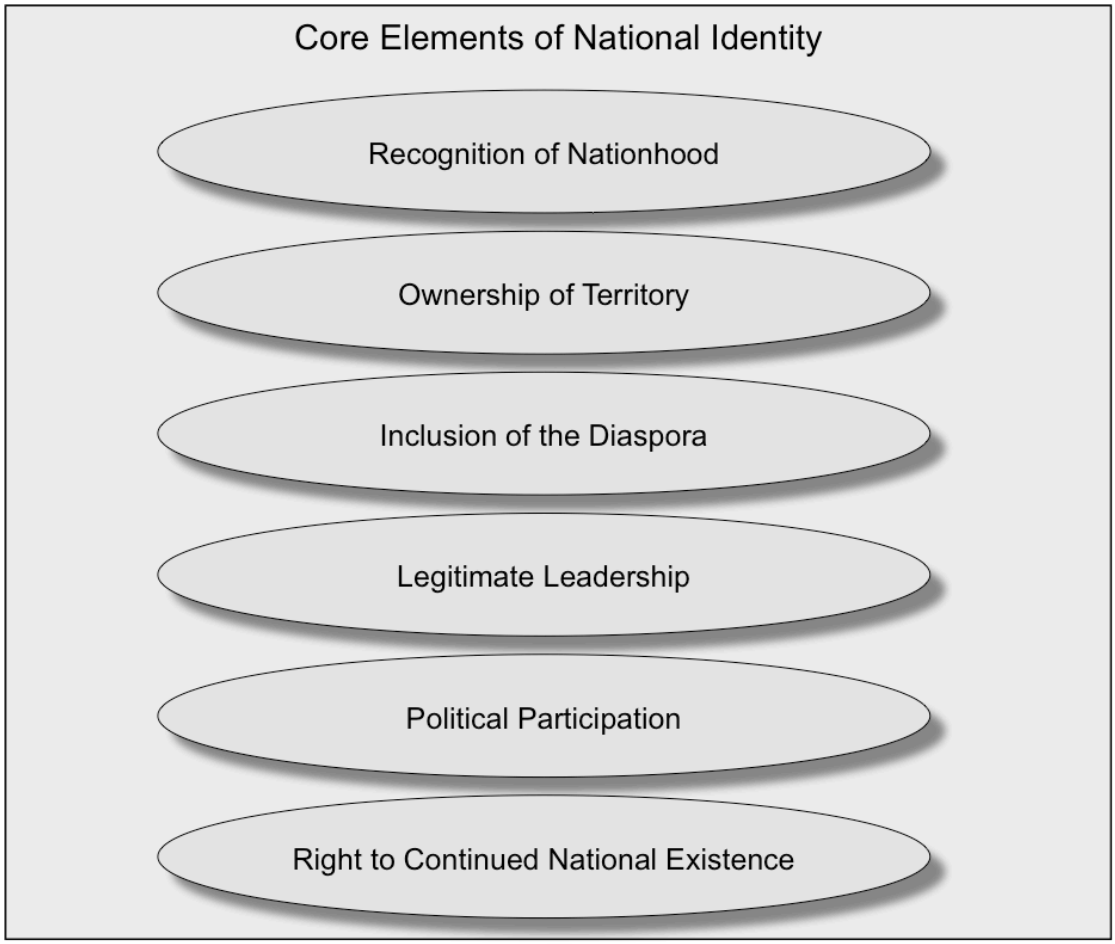
To formally make a concession to the other side, the sixth prerequisite needs to me met. The changes, which each polity underwent, need to be expressed in structural changes of the leadership of the other side. Acceptance of change occurring in the opponent's leadership is a central element to build mutual trust between the conflict parties because the other party's leadership will account for future change to happen or not. It determines each party's assessment of what they may realistically expect from the other side and the probable consequences their own moves will have in the future. As with the

attitude towards believing in future change of the conflict scenario in general, the same tendency prevails with regard to the leadership of the other side. There is a general tendency to perceive it as being static and assume that apart from minor adjustments in personnel and tactics it is not likely to change. Again, evidence of structural change in the other side's leadership is essential for each side to risk a change in its own political direction.

It is vital to outline future scenarios in detail so that both sides can evaluate their probable consequences, which should make them able to commit to concessions that will lead to an altered situation. For example, Israelis are only likely to agree to the establishment of a Palestinian state, if Palestinians are ready to commit to a detailed process of moving towards constituting a state that will reassure Israelis that they need not fear for their security. On the other hand, Israelis will need to present Palestinians with concrete steps, which they are willing to take to assure the establishment of a Palestinian state. Only if Israelis dispel the Palestinian fear of not being able to form their own state, will the Palestinians be ready, to concede to Israeli demands.

In addition to the psychological prerequisites there is a further condition that needs to be met for the purpose of identity negotiation. Kelman stresses that the core construct of the conflict parties' national identity needs to stay intact and must be confirmed to account for a strong sense of self, which in turn is necessary to discuss changeable identity aspects. Kelman counts six elements that are core to Palestinian and Israeli national identity (1987: 349ff.).

The first core identity element concerns nationhood. For their identity to stay intact, each party needs to receive recognition of their nationhood by the other party. The second unalterable part of national identity refers to territorial ownership. A national community needs to be able to express its political identity through the sense of ownership of a territory.



Third, Palestinians as well as Israelis need others to recognize that they see themselves as members of a larger people, part of which lives in its ancestral homeland and part of it in the diaspora. It is important for both peoples that the other recognizes that those living in the diaspora form part of their nation. Fourth, Palestinians and Israelis need to be able to organize themselves politically and assemble a legitimate leadership. Each party's leadership needs to be acknowledged and respected by the other as their legitimate political representative. Fifth, both need a sense of political participation that can be accounted for through legitimately representative politicians. Finally, both groups need assurance of their right to continued national existence.

The communication techniques employed by IPS ensure that the core elements are respected and confirmed during the discussions. In this environment identity threats are soothed and the parties' sense of self strengthened. Such an atmosphere enables participants to negotiate their perception and ways of expressing some more peripheral elements of their national identities.

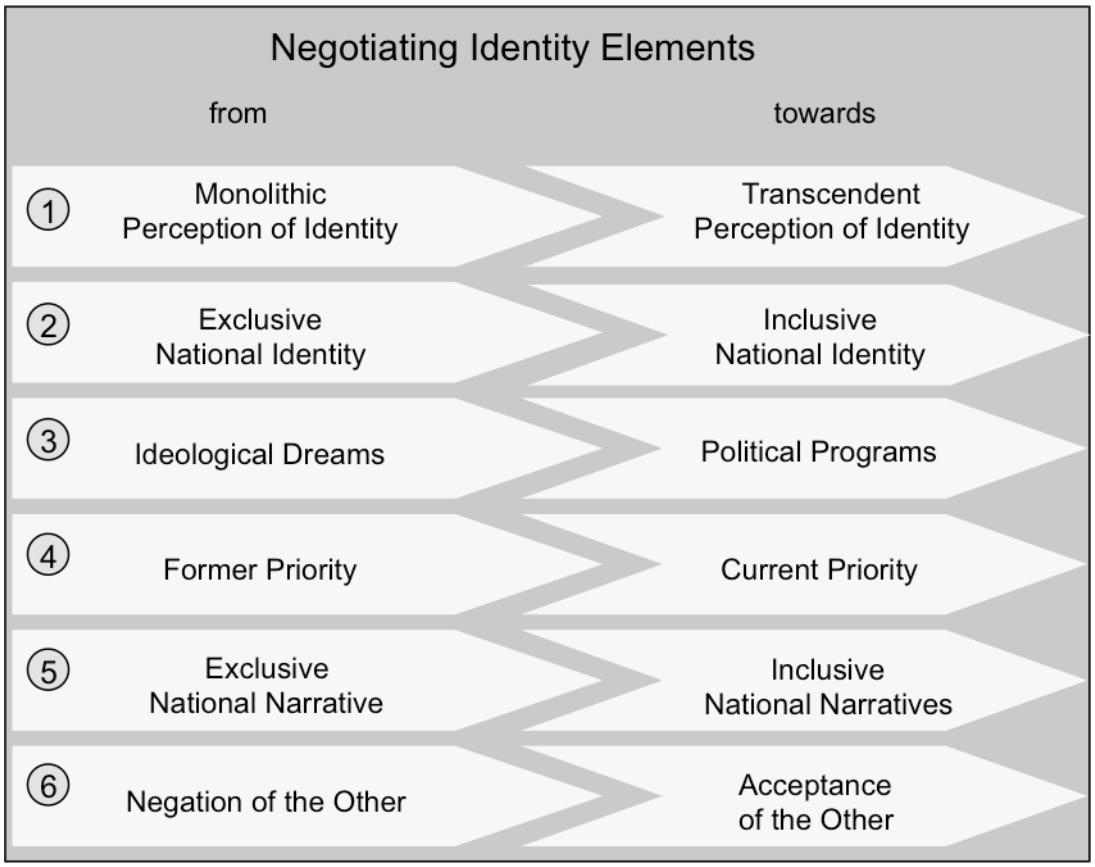
Negotiable Elements of Israeli and Palestinian National Identity

Changes in identity elements are a legitimate subject for negotiation because the identity of one group has significant implications for the identity of the other. Whenever one group translates the self-definition of its nationhood into action, the other is inevitably affected. Also, conflict parties perceived changes to less central identity elements as protecting the core of their identities. For example, the majority of Israelis and Palestinians came to accept territorial compromise for the purpose of maintaining their national identity.

Kelman distinguishes six identity elements that can be negotiated, he explains how they can be changed and which aspects may be omitted or altered. (Kelman, 2001: 201ff.).

The first negotiable element is a monolithic perception of national identity. A monolithic view of national identity implies that all its dimensions like ethnic and political boundaries as well as boundaries of sentimental attachment are seen as being highly correlated. This leads to a completely separated perception of self and other along these lines. Negotiating a monolithic view consists of realizing that the different boundaries to group identity do not necessarily coincide. The boundaries of sentimental attachment to the land must not necessarily be congruent with the political boundaries of a state. It is possible to keep one's attachment to a homeland without "owning"

the entire territory of that homeland in the form of establishing a sovereign state on the entire land.



Recognizing different demarcations of identity expressions opens the way to the development of a transcendent identity that is bigger then the particularistic identity of each conflict party. A transcendent identity layer can include several particular identity layers. If conflict parties can engage in a transcendent view of their national identity they become able to recognize that one of their identity layers consists of their need to have ownership over a given territory while another identity layer consists of their attachment to the homeland. If both of theses identity perceptions can coexist and accommodated in the national identity of both conflict parties, it becomes possible for both of

them to maintain a common attachment to their entire homeland *and* "own" only part of that land as their political state (Kelman, 2001: 201-202).

The second negotiable element consists of the exclusive perception of national identity. An exclusive identity perception implies a zero-sum view in which meeting the other's claims equals having to give up one's own, rendering the other's claims invalid. Negotiating exclusive identity implies discovering shared identity elements and that the claims of the two sides are not necessarily exclusive. An inclusive identity allows for the recognition that accepting the other's claims as valid does not necessitate invalidating one's own claims. Thereby they can discover that they share certain claims, concerns and needs. Israelis and Palestinians share many claims and concerns, like their claim to the same land, but also the concern about and for secure living conditions. Recognizing shared elements opens the way to political solutions based on sharing resources and territory.

A third realm of negotiation consists of outdated elements of group identity. These can comprise ideological dreams of glorified images that have no more current political relevance. For Palestinians this would imply to move away from their reference to the armed struggle as the way to eliminate the Zionist entity towards establishing a strong political representation. For Israelis it meant to move away from their reference to the Zionist project of making the desert bloom towards fostering prosperity of their constituency. By omitting exaggerated images from their rhetoric, both parties can discard many items that cause humiliation and fear to the other side, without giving away core elements of their national identity.

A fourth negotiable identity aspect is the prioritization of its constituting elements. For example, territorial ambitions that were pursued as a top of the list issue may be relegated to a lower priority, because parties recognize that its pursuit had become too costly. Palestinians, for instance, have over time

qualified recovering the lost land in its entirety as less important than ending the occupation and establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, while Israelis began to give priority to maintaining the Jewish character of Israel over controlling the whole land of Greater Israel. Elements that have been relegated to a lower priority become available for negotiated compromise.

The fifth negotiable element touches on national narratives. National narratives can be changed if each party ceases to exclude the narrative of the other. Such acceptance starts by learning to accept the other's story as it is without necessarily agreeing with it. Thereby each party can accommodate parts of the other's view of history within their own narrative. For example, each side may become ready to acknowledge their role in the course of the conflict and accept a share of the responsibility for the causes of the conflict.

If conflict parties are able to make room for the history of their opponent within their own understanding of their national identity they get very close to alter the identity element that is most important to maintaining the conflict. That identity element consists of the negation of the other's identity as an integral part of one's own identity. The negation of the other as a part of each group's national identity has been socially constructed by the experiences both parties made during the development of the conflict. It can, therefore, be deconstructed. To achieve this, each party needs to move from their perception that portrays the other's demise as a condition for their own survival, to a perception that allows for the recognition and acceptance of the other's existence as a people.

In the course of interactive problem-solving workshops, Israeli and Palestinian participants have negotiated aspects of the monolithic images they held of each other. They discovered that there is a distinction between the other's ideological dreams and operational programs, and that the other has positive goals beyond destruction of their group. Each party was able to enter

into the other's perspective and recognize the historical sources of the other's claims and grievances, the depth of the other's fears and the authenticity of the other's sense of people hood.

Some of the achieved changes have, however, not been fully resistant to setbacks of further conflict dynamics. As the present study aims at finding out, how negotiated identity changes have contributed to the Peace Process, it is relevant to look at the nature and quality of the negotiated identity elements and to find out under which conditions identity changes are sustainable.

The sustainability of negotiated identity changes

The sustainability of identity changes or the nature of the impact of the identity factor on the dynamics of the Peace Process depends on the *stability*, *integrity*, and *authenticity* of the negotiated identity changes. In chapter two, we discussed the three identity dimensions that Kelman describes to account for the capacity of identity elements to cope with the challenges of social interaction and resist to variations in social context.

Taking the perspective of a conflict resolution practitioner, we would like to find out, how stable, integrated and authentic identity changes can be negotiated. Kelman has looked at how social influences can impact on identity formation by discussing a model of social influence. The model of social influence had been developed in the framework of explaining the processes of attitude and opinion change (see Kelman 1958, 1961 and Jahoda, 1956).

Social influence is defined in this context, as a change in a person's behavior as a result of induction by another person or a group. Induction refers to an action that points to a new direction for the person and makes a new behavioral possibility available to her or him (Kelman, 1998: 7).

According to Kelman, three processes of social influence may contribute to the acquisition of elements of personal identity (Kelman, 1998: 12). The

three processes of social influence that may contribute to the formation and adoption of identity elements are called: *compliance, identification, and internalization* (Kelman, 1958: 53).

The basic assumption of the model is that each of the three processes is determined by a qualitatively distinct set of antecedent conditions and yields a qualitatively different type of change. If change is induced by *compliance* it has been motivated by the aim to achieve some kind of reward and approval, or in order to avoid punishment or disapproval. If change originates from *identification* it has been motivated by the aim of maintaining a desired relationship and the self-definition anchored in that relationship. If change comes about through *internalization*, it derives from the motivation to maintain the congruence of one's own value system (Kelman, 1958: 53).

Behavior resulting from a compliance-induced change addresses interests and depends on a system of enforceable rules, which individuals or groups of individuals are expected to comply with. Behavior resulting from an identification-induced change centers on the relationship between individuals and groups and depends on a system of shared roles, which individuals and groups identify with. Behavior resulting from an internalization-induced change centers on the core of individual identities and is governed by a person’s own value system (Kelman, 1961: 67ff.).

With regard to identity formation, a stable and authentic identity change is likely to emerge from *internalization.* Internalization involves the acceptance of social influence because the induced behavior is congruent with the person’s own value system. Adopting the new behavior involves some modification of the behavior to fit it into each individual’s preexisting identity structure as well as some modification of the existing identity structure to accommodate the new element. The new identity element is stable because it is integrated into the

individual's value system and bears the individual's personal stamp (Kelman, 1998: 13).

The process of *identification* also contributes to identity formation but does not lead to authentic identity elements but only to *vicarious* identity elements (Kelman, 1998: 12). Identification of individuals and groups of individuals with another group often occurs to compensate for a characteristic that those individuals lack. Thereby each group takes on a role that is defined by the system of the relationship between the two groups. The identification with the new identity aspect means that it is adopted as it is without adapting it to an individual's capacities and without integrating it into the personal value system. Vicarious identity elements only remain intact as long as the relationship from which they derive persists. If the social context changes in a way that the adopted role is no longer salient, the vicarious identity element will be changed or abandoned.

The process of *compliance* can lead to the adoption of certain patterns of self-presentation to gain the approval of or conform to the expectations of another group for the purpose of smooth interaction with that group in a particular set of situations. According to Kelman, one can only speak of identity elements based on compliance if such self-presentations become part of an individual's self-definition – in the sense that they define themselves in terms of the characteristics favored by the other or the categories imposed by the other (1998: 13). Such *conferred* identity elements are highly dependent on the situation and the characteristics of the group with whom an individual interacts (Kelman, 1998:14). Such elements of identity are thus low in authenticity, stability and integration.

Kelman points out that the contributions of the three processes of influence to identity formation are not sharply separate and that identity formation is never simply a matter of either internalization or identification or

compliance (1998:14). The three processes can interact with each other in the development of personal identity and the activation of conferred and vicarious elements may help to strengthen authentic identity elements or facilitate their expression.

The impact of the identity factor on conflict resolution is, of course, more substantial if authentic identity changes can be negotiated. The second part of the study will observe how and to what extent identity aspects have been negotiated in problem-solving workshops held in the 1990s. As the discussions of the workshop participants contain many references to actualities of the time, the following chapter four, gives an overview of the contemporary historic context and describes events and developments that have influenced the Peace Process.

4 Historical Context of the Peace Process

The development of identity changes is a long and complex process caused by different motivators and occurs at different levels. The way Israelis and Palestinians define their national identity has to some extent, changed during the Peace Process in the 1990s. The transformation of their identity has occurred at an individual level of the members of each national collective and has possibly been initiated at the micro-level of Track Two efforts like interactive problem-solving workshops. The manifestation of the identity changes, on the other hand, took place at the collective level in the context of macro-level conditions that enabled the changed realities to take hold. Moreover, while changes achieved at a micro-level can have an impact on macro-level events, the latter influence and stimulate micro-level developments.

With the intent of making this interactive effect between micro-level and macro-level events transparent, Part II follows the continuous application of IPS during different phases of the Peace Process in the 1990s, set. Chapter four explores some of the developments that created an optimal opportunity for Israelis and Palestinians to negotiate the Oslo Accords and situates the workshop meetings in the historical context of the Peace Process. The fifth chapter follows the micro-level workshop discussions, held during the pre-negotiation stage. The sixth chapter then follows workshop discussions that occurred alongside of official negotiations of the Peace Process.

The historical context of the Peace Process, in which the continuing application of IPS workshops takes place, spans from developments that laid the groundwork for the Peace Process, encompasses the first multilateral Middle-East peace negotiations that were followed by the Oslo Accords with its five agreements, and ends with the breakdown of the Camp David negotiations,

Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount and the start of the Second Intifada (Rothstein, 2002.)

Developments that created momentum for the Peace Process contained the Intifada, the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, the systematic diplomatic strategy of the US, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the Gulf Crisis. These developments added to the personal motivation of at the time Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rhabin and PLO Chairman Arafat to sign the papers that had been drafted in private meetings in Norway.

Intifada

The Intifada – 'the shaking off' – erupted on December 8th, in 1987. A tank transport vehicle of the Israeli Army crashed into a line of Palestinian cars traveling back to Gaza after a day of work in Israel. Funerals held for some of the victims turned into massive demonstrations. In the course of the following weeks, a large-scale uprising followed this triggering event that would last in varying intensity throughout the course of the following years. Demonstrations in the refugee camps spread to major towns in Gaza, to villages in the West Bank, and for the first time also to East Jerusalem (Tessler, 1994).

The Intifada mobilized all age groups and social classes but particularly expressed the assertiveness of the generation born after 1967, who had lived their whole lives under occupation. They transformed their frustration and anger about humiliating living conditions into a decisive and extremely well structured upheaval. Young neighborhood committees lined up with the existing PLO structures and organized themselves in the "Unified National Leadership of the Intifada" (UNLI) and eventually called themselves the Unified National Leadership of the PLO.

Thereby the Intifada strengthened the position of the PLO and reconfirmed its acceptance not only by the Palestinian population living within the Occupied Territories but also by those living in the diaspora as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. This position of the PLO proved to be a crucial element in the ensuing Peace Process.

The impact of the Intifada on Israel was less immediate but had a profound long-term effect. It has rendered the occupation decisively more difficult and costly. Existing forms of social control were no longer effective confronting Israel with increased expenses to maintain order. Fewer Palestinians worked in Israel, Israeli consumer goods were boycotted, and a partially successful campaign against the payment of taxes in the territories was launched (Shehadeh, 1988).

Politically, the Intifada added to the polarization between the proponents of territorial compromise and those in favor of a maximalist "Greater Israel" position. This effected added to the collapse of Israel's national unity government in 1990. Further, the Intifada accentuated the minority status of Israeli Arabs, who showed a surge in expressing sympathy and solidarity for Palestinians living under occupation (Rouhana, 1990). Over all, the Intifada spurred the emergence of greater political realism towards the Palestinian issue among important segments of both the Labor and Likud parties (Tessler, 1991).

On an international level the Intifada contributed to a shift in perspective. It moved the struggle between Palestinians and Israelis to the center of the Arab-Israeli conflict and highlighted significantly, the identity and security needs of Palestinians and Israelis. This contributed to the possibility for negotiations that would address the needs of the two communities.

Palestinian Declaration of Independence

On July 28th in 1988, King Hussein of Jordan announced the termination of a $1.3 billion development program for the West Bank. He described the blatant move as measure allowing the PLO to take over more responsibility for the area. Two days later, he formally dissolved Parliament, ending West Bank representation in the legislature (Nevo, 2006).

In his address to the nation On July 31st, King Hussein proclaimed that Jordan would formally cede sovereignty over the occupied West Bank – with the exception of guardianship over the Muslim Holy Sites of Jerusalem. He thereby transferred all control over territory, administrative and legal matters to the PLO. This move strengthened the legitimacy of the PLO's as the representative of the Palestinians and fostered their political leverage (Kurtzer and Lasensky, 2008)

On November 15th of the same year, the Palestinian National Council, the legislative body of the PLO adopted the Declaration of Independence and the Political Program. The Declaration proclaimed the establishment of the independent state of Palestine; while the Political Program elaborated on the objectives of the declaration. The Declaration was of historical significance for Israeli-Palestinian relations as it called for a two-state solution and for peaceful coexistence of the two neighboring states and the two peoples. The Palestinians thereby accepted the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as an ultimate objective and *implicitly* accepted not only UN Resolution 242 and 338, but most of all recognized Israel's right to exist. The Declaration of Independence gave impetus to the further development of Israeli-Palestinian relations, by leading to a diplomatic dialogue with the US, and by further contributing to the acceptance of the PLO as the legitimate representation of the Palestinian people (Rabie, 1995).

US Diplomatic Relations with the PLO and Israel

In December 1988, following the adoption of the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, the US started a dialogue with the PLO in Tunis. The Declaration together with the stated Political Program seemed to respond to US policy demands formulated by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in 1975, implicitly recognizing Israel's right to exist and accepting Security Council Resolution 242 and 338. By calling for a two-state solution and for peaceful coexistence of the two neighboring states and the two peoples, the Palestinians accepted the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as an ultimate objective. As the documents remained unclear about the acceptance of the UN Resolutions and renouncement on terrorism, and did not explicitly recognize the existence of Israel, the US asked the PLO for further clarification. When Arafat addressed the UN General Assembly in Geneva, on December 13th 1988, he remained vague about the acceptance of the UN Resolutions and the acceptance of Israel. A day later, Arafat called a press conference and specifically stated that Palestine, Israel and their neighbors had a right to exist and clearly renounced from terrorism. The public pledge of the PLO's policy change was sufficient to remove existing ambiguities and led the US to engage in a dialogue with the PLO (Barrari, 2004).

The US administration under President George H. W. Bush followed a clear and sustained strategy to bring about a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Even though the negotiating environment was unfavorable in 1989, the Bush team sought to create opportunities and develop new ideas. Also, the Bush administration exerted increased pressure on the Israeli government to end the occupation and to recognize the political rights of the Palestinian people. Shamir responded to that pressure by presenting the Four Point Plan to approach the Palestinian-Israeli dispute on May 14th, 1989 in Washing-

ton. The Plan contained four basic points: Firstly, strengthening the peace with Egypt as a regional cornerstone, second, promoting full peaceful relations with the Arab states, third improving refugee conditions through international efforts, and finally Palestinian elections and interim self-rule for a five year period leading to a "permanent solution" (Lukacs, 1992: 236-237). These propositions did not contain new ideas but borrowed from the Camp David Accords. It was mostly a pretense of seemingly playing along with US demands.

In response, the US Secretary of State, James Baker, submitted a Five Point Plan to Israel and Egypt on November 1st, 1989. The plan was an effort to support foregoing attempts of Israel and Egypt to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and to solve some of its obstructions. Israel had been reluctant to follow propositions for engaging in a negotiation process because it feared that Egypt would introduce the PLO through the back door.

First, Baker's Plan agreed that: "[...] an Israeli delegation should conduct a dialogue with a Palestinian delegation [put together with Egyptian help] in Cairo"; second, "the United States understands that Egypt cannot substitute itself for the Palestinians and that Egypt will consult with Palestinians on all aspects of the dialogue. Egypt will also consult with Israel and the United states". Third, the Plan assures that: "the United States understands that Israel will attend the dialogue only after a satisfactory list of Palestinians has been worked out". Fourth, the Plan reads that: "the United States understands that the government of Israel will come to the dialogue on the basis of the Israeli government's May 14th [1989] initiative. The United States further understands that Palestinians will come to the dialogue prepared to discuss elections and the negotiation process in accordance with Israel's initiative. The fifth and final point of the Plan states that: "in order to facilitate this process, the US proposes

that the foreign ministers of Israel, Egypt and the US meet in Washington within two weeks" (Lukacs, 1992: 133).

The purpose of the proposed dialogue was to discuss elections in the Occupied Territories and to negotiate a political settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli dispute. Israel said to agree with Baker's plan if the PLO would in no way participate in the discussions (not even through the naming of Palestinian delegates) and if the discussions would be strictly limited to preparations for Palestinian elections. In a vote of no confidence precipitated by disagreement over the response to the Baker initiative, the National Unity government (with a strong left wing Labor party) fell in March 1990. Prime Minister Shamir formed a new government (dominated by the right wing Likud party) in June 1990 and rejected the Baker Plan (Bentsur, 2001).

On May 30st 1990, the Palestine Liberation Front (a small faction backed by Iraq) led by Abu al-Abbas embarked on an operation launching six boats with armed personnel off Israel's coast. Israeli forces captured the group, after the latter had landed on Israeli shores but before it had carried out its mission. The US considered the attempt a terrorist attack and demanded the PLO to condemn it and expel Abu al-Abbas from the PLO's executive committee. As the PLO refused to answer any of these demands, President Bush ordered the suspension of the US-PLO dialogue (Rabie, 1995).

The End of the Cold War

The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the USSR had a deep impact on the entire Middle Eastern region by causing a remarkable revision of fortune and collapse of long-held premises. The Arab world was forced to revise their most cherished ideas of Pan-Arab nationalism, of soviet-modeled economy and state structure, of secure oil-wealth and military predominance.

The new strategic setting brought about by the developments leading to the end of the Cold War made it much more difficult to paint over domestic problems for Middle Eastern rulers. Popular frustration with the failure of politicians to grapple with poverty, injustice, lack of respect for human rights, corruption, and violence, was widely expressed throughout the region. Israel's neighboring states had realized that they were not able to destroy Israel, that the attempt to do so had been exceptionally costly and had actually strengthened Israel's stand. Yet ideology, rivalries between states, and the insecurity of governments made it difficult to end the conflict – from which a deadlock situation resulted. The Arab-Israeli conflict, which had been portrayed as a regional-policy priority was actually used by Syria, Egypt and Jordan to camouflage internal problems. The Arab-Israeli conflict was not a cause but a visible manifestation of internal Arab struggles over identity, economic development and military power (Rubin, 1991: 136).

With the end of the Cold War, Israel lost strategic relevance for the United States in the Middle East. This became apparent during the Gulf Crisis, when Israel was forced to completely rely on US military support. Further, the rapid deterioration of economic conditions in the Soviet Union, coupled with the American decision to limit the acceptance of Soviet refugees, brought about a dramatic influx of Soviet Jewish immigrants. In 1990 a total of nearly 200,000 Soviet Jews were flocking to Israel (Quandt, 1990/91: 57).

For the Palestinians the end of the Cold War meant a sever loss of financial and moral support. The Soviet immigration stimulated fears that possibilities to form a sovereign state in the shrinking territories of the West Bank and the small area of the Gaza strip were deteriorating. This scenario was one of the reasons why Saddam Hussein's bid for power in the Gulf Crisis seemed to offer a means of checking Israeli expansion that appealed to the Palestinians.

The Gulf Crisis

On August 2nd in 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, and caused unlimited international attention as well as serious diplomatic effort, headed by the US government, to deter further aggression and restore Kuwaiti sovereignty. The Gulf Crisis had developed into the Second Gulf War on January 17th in 1991, when hostilities of the Operation Desert Storm began. A coalition of 34 countries under US lead had deployed troops in Saudi Arabia. They started to use force after diplomatic efforts had failed to bring Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. The war ended on March 1st, 1991with the liberation of Kuwait (Tessler, 1994).

For the Palestinians, the Gulf Crisis had a weakening effect on their political stand. The PLO leadership opposed military action by the US and its allies. This position was perceived by Israelis as well as by the international community as supporting Saddam Hussein. As a consequence the US and other Western Powers but also the Gulf States distanced themselves from the PLO and withdrew their political and financial support, further deteriorating the economic situation in the Occupied Territories, which had already suffered from the Intifada and the end of the Cold War.

For Israel, the Gulf Crisis had both negative and positive consequences. A strengthening effect derived form a renewal in Israel's military predominance in the region. The destruction of Iraq's military potential eliminated Israel's most threatening regional opponent. No other neighboring Arab state would be able to endanger Israel's existence as a state.

Nevertheless, the Gulf War also had a destabilizing effect on Israel with regard to national politics and the national moral. During the Gulf War Israel had to face its loss of strategic importance for the US in the Middle East. Not only was Israel asked by the US to exclude itself from the military alliance it formed with the major Arab states in the region, but it even had to rely on the

US for its own defense. When in January 1991, Israel was attacked form Iraq with a missile launch, the United States asked Israel not to respond. Israel's military passivity produced a feeling of traumatic humiliation among large parts of the Israeli public (Schiff, 1991: 19). The paradoxical feeling of having achieved strategic gain without any real military effort lowered the Israeli morale and the departure of their historic military self-sufficiency heightened Israel's sense of vulnerability and dependence on the US.

The Gulf crisis created circumstances that made both the PLO and Israel highly susceptible to pressures from the US, which the latter was keen to apply in order to consolidate the dominant position it held at that time. Moreover, the Gulf War had led to a security policy situation in the area that put further pressure on the two parties. A maintenance of the status quo or a refusal of tackling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would give the surrounding Arab states the possibility to develop or obtain mass destructive weapons (Alpher, 1994: 233). Pressure to engage in negotiations also grew from the Israeli public. Polls had shown that 60% of the Israelis were in favor of negotiations on the basis of "Land for Peace" (Hadar, 1992: 87). Reluctance from the Likud government to engage in a negotiation process consequently threatened a re-election of Shamir.

The Madrid Conference

Even before the Gulf War ended, the US distanced itself from the peace-conducive atmosphere and stopped insisting on further peace initiatives. Under the lead of Secretary of State James Baker the US tried to bring Israel and its opponents to the negotiating table. In preparation of the Madrid Conference, Baker visited the Middle East eight times (Bentsur, 2001).

By June1990, the Israeli government showed itself ready again to accept the American invitation to a peace conference, provided certain conditions on Palestinian representation would be met. Those conditions contained that the Palestinian delegation would form part of the Jordanian delegation, that it would not include PLO representatives, nor people living in East Jerusalem or outside the occupied territories. The Israeli government expected the US to negotiate such conditions with the Arab side and bring them to commit to these conditions in *a Memorandum of Understanding* that the Israeli and the Palestinian delegation would sign (Cowell, 1991).

The US on their part did not speak of a memorandum but of letters of assurance that would be sent to all parties eventually agreeing to attend the peace conference (including Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Israel) in order to broker outstanding reservations about their participation. Israeli officials just interpreted the US offer as leading to a Memorandum of Understanding that would carry more weight (Cowell, 1991). When the Israeli government realized that the US brokered letters of assurance would not have the binding character as their envisioned Memorandum, they stalled their move towards entering peace talks.

By mid 1991, the US was able to gain Syria, who had lost Soviet political and military support, as a partner in achieving peace with Israel. On July 14th 1991, Syria's President Assad confirmed in a letter to US President Bush his willingness to take part in direct negotiations with Israel on the basis of a land-for-peace principle. Following this diplomatic move, Israel was put on the spot. The US augmented the pressure on Israel by withholding a guarantee for a $10 billion loan. In order to avoid confrontation with the US and preventing a loss of their awaited loan for settling Soviet-Jewish immigrants, Israeli Prime Minister Shamir announced his acceptance of the American proposal for a

peace conference on August 1st, under the condition of having control over the list of Palestinian negotiators (Frankel, 1995).

The vulnerable position of both the PLO, being politically isolated and financially cut off, and Israel being highly dependent on the US, provided President Bush and Secretary of State Baker with the leverage to push the parties to take part in the Madrid Conference that opened on October 30th in 1991 as well as the bilateral talks in Washington and the ensuing multilateral talks, although they clearly lacked commitment for the negotiations. PLO Chairmen Arafat had to accept an *indirect* role for the PLO, which he did not agree with, while Israeli Prime Minister Shamir had to enter negotiations he did not consent to a priori. That lack of commitment accounted for the failure of the Washington talks, with limited substantial outcomes that led to a standstill in the peace process.

The Norway Channel

While the bilateral talks between the Jordanian-Palestinian and the Israeli delegation continued without producing results, members of the PLO and Israeli officials started to engage in secret negotiations in Norway in January 1993. Norway's involvement in the matter stemmed from its close ties to both Israel and the PLO. Norway was sympathetic to the suffering of the Jewish people during the Second World War, and supported the founding of Israel. Although strained by the outcome of the 1967 war, the ties to Israel never completely disappeared and were renewed with the new generation of Israeli doves emerging within the Israeli Labor party. Norwegian Labor governments built relations with the PLO, since the 1970's and supported the cause of the Palestinian people. After the Gulf War, the PLO turned to Norway to facilitate contacts with Israel (Corbin, 1994).

A number of factors accounted for the fact that the papers drafted in Norway resulted in a signed peace agreement. Among them was the election of Yitzhak Rabin as Israel's Prime Minister in June 1992. He headed a Labor-led government that was genuinely interested in seriously committing to fruitful negotiations. Also, Rabin came to realize – although he had opposed the idea throughout his political career – that the PLO was a necessary negotiation partner for reaching a peaceful agreement with the Palestinians. Another factor was Arafat's realization that an agreement had to be reached with Rabin or loose the chance to a later right-wing Likud government under Benjamin Netanyahu (Kelman, 1997: 188). Failure to reach an agreement now, would not only have jeopardized the ultimate goal for Rabin to achieve Israeli security and for Arafat to achieve ultimate Palestinian statehood, but would also have imperiled their political survival. This personal motivation of both Rabin and Arafat was the catalyst for the positive reception of the papers that had been drafted in the privacy of the Oslo Channel by unofficial representatives of the two parties.

The US, however, ignored and failed to shape the secret contacts between Israel and the PLO. Responsible for this unfortunate strategy was in part the decision of the Clinton administration to turn their focus away from the achievement of the Palestinians and instead focus on the Israel-Syria track of the official negotiation process. Not withstanding its focus on Syria, the Clinton team did not develop that track's full potential. In summer 1993, Rabin secretly told Secretary of State Warren Christopher and envoy Dennis Ross, that Israel was willing to negotiate a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights in exchange for full peace agreed security arrangements with Syria (Kurtzer and Lasensky, 2008: 18). Instead of pursuing that opening in a streamlined shuttle diplomacy effort of the past, the Clinton administration let the opportunity pass by.

The Oslo Accords

The first document of the Oslo Accords, the *Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (DoP),* was finalized in Oslo on August 20th and signed on September 13th in 1993 in Washington. The Declaration was accompanied by an exchange of *Letters of Mutual Recognition* between PLO leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin granting mutual acknowledgement of the two peoples' national existence (Beilin, 1999)

In addition to the text of the Declaration itself, the DoP comprises four annexes dealing with elections, withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area, economic and regional-level cooperation, as well as a series of agreed and separately signed minutes that amplify various articles of the Declaration. These documents set out a framework for an interim period of five years during which agreements on final status arrangements should be negotiated (Buchanan, 2000: 162ff.).

In 1994 three follow-up agreements of the Oslo Accords were signed. In May, the *Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area* was completed, implementing the first phase of the Declaration of Principles. It contained the withdrawal of Israeli forces from these areas and the transfer of responsibilities for public order and internal security to the Palestinian police force. The agreement further held that Israel would retain authority over the rest of the West Bank until redeployment.

In August, the *Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities* was reached between Israel and the Palestinians. The latter put the transfer of authority in the sphere of education and culture, health, social welfare, tourism and taxation into effect.

In October, the *Treaty of Pace between the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan* was concluded between Israel and Jordan. The formal peace treaty defined the border between the two countries and normalized relations between the two peoples.

In May 1995, the *Gaza-Jericho Agreement* was signed between Israel and the PLO in Cairo. It established the Palestinian Authority (PA) and laid out its jurisdictional power. The agreement represented the famous "land for peace" bargain and entailed obligations for both sides. Israel committed to turn territory over to the PA, while the PA committed to combat terror and prevent violence (Egeland, 1999).

In September the *Protocol on further Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities* transferred further power to the Palestinian Authority; while the *Interim Agreement* incorporated and superseded the earlier Oslo Accords and is therefore also known as Oslo II. Israel withdrew from six more West Bank towns handing over jurisdiction of areas that contained most of the Palestinian population to their own authority. The process was completed in January 1997 with the *Hebron Agreement*.

In October 1998, Israelis and Palestinians agreed to the *Wye River Memorandum* containing further Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank and a commitment form the Palestinian Authority to combat terrorism (Ross, 2004). Implementation of the memorandum was cancelled due to clashes between Israeli and Palestinian troops later that year. These incidents were indicative of the beginning of a deterioration of the Peace Process that unfolded in 2000 when the Camp David negotiations failed and Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount triggered the Second Intifada.

The subsequent chapter five describes discussions of the Continuing Workshop that were held during the pre-negotiation stage of the Peace Process

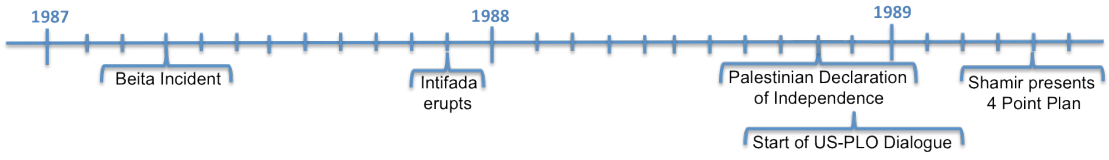
and situates them in the context of the events and developments of their contemporary history.

5 Interactive Problem Solving during Pre-negotiation

The study of IPS workshops during the pre-negotiation phase of the Peace Process is based on the primary sources of anonymous notes, which members of the third-party staff took during workshop sessions. The notes are anonymous in the sense that the names of the participants have not been revealed. To distinguish between different speakers, the participants' nationality is indicated with code. Thereby, nothing that had been said during the meetings can be attributed to a particular person. During a research stay at Harvard University, the author was allowed to read the workshop transcripts and take notes. The following description of applied IPS, documents some of the discussions' central argumentations. As workshop participants point to past and contemporary events in no chronological order during the discussion sessions, footnotes provide historical background information and a timeline guides through the dense web of events.

The Continuing Workshop

The Continuing Workshop distinguished itself from previously held workshops by consisting of a series of meetings with the same participants. Herbert C. Kelman, at the time Richard Clarke Cabot Professor of Social Ethics at the Department of Psychology at Harvard University and from 1993 onwards directing the Program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution (PICAR) at the Weatherhead Center; and his colleague Nadim Rouhana, at the time Associate Professor at the Graduate Program in Dispute Resolution at the University of Massachusetts-Boston, were able to engage six Israeli and six

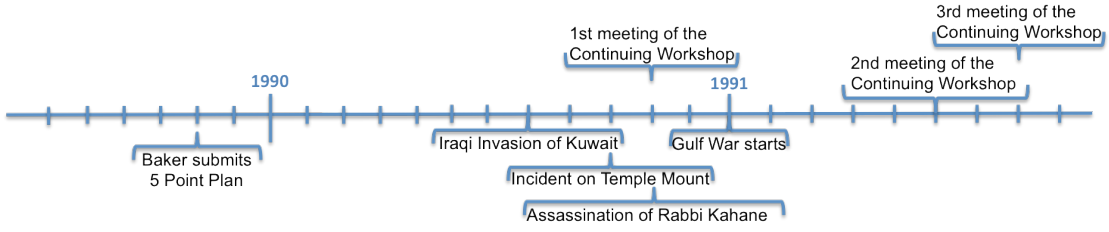


Palestinian participants to take part in three meetings between 1990 and 1991. At the end of the third meeting, the participants wished to engage in further workshops and started, together with the third party, organizing new meetings, when in October 1991 official negotiations began in Madrid and introduced new parameters for the workshop format. After a number of meetings and two additional workshops with the continuing group, some of the former participants established together with Kelman and Rouhana the Joint Working Group on Israeli Palestinian Relations in 1994. The Joint Working Group published three concept papers that were also printed as journal articles.

Up to twenty people were involved in the Continuing Workshop. The third party team counted four members: Herbert C. Kelman; Nadim Rouhana, Harold Saunders – director of International Relations at the Kettering Foundation and former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs – and Christopher Mitchell – director of the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University. The third-party staff consisted of four to five members, who were responsible for note taking and organizational tasks. The Israeli and the Palestinian teams were supposed to contain six members each, but not all of the participants were able to attend each meeting.

First Meeting of the Continuing Workshop in November 1990

When the continuing group first convened, the meetings were started with four pre-workshop sessions, in which the third party met two times with

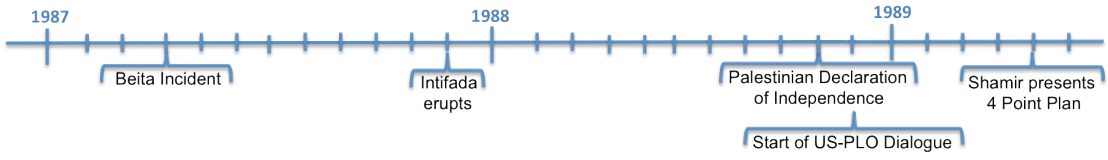


the Palestinian and two times with the Israeli team respectively. The purpose of the pre-workshop sessions was to allow participants to familiarize themselves with the third party, workshop procedures and ground rules, before they were confronted with the adversary team. Also, they allowed the third party to learn how each party had experienced recent political developments and to work out an agenda for the subsequent meetings according to that information.

The third party started the pre-workshop sessions by explaining why three Palestinian participants were not able to attend the first sequels of meetings that took place in the United States. Two had been held back because they did not receive their travel permits from the Israeli government, while one had been unable to travel due to health problems. The third party decided not to replace the three missing Palestinian participants because they found the most important thing was to maintain the integrity of the team. They saw the team as being intact and thought it possible to go ahead with the workshop with only half of the team members present, as meetings were consecutive and offered possibilities for the groups to engage in interim activities between the meetings.

Pre-workshop Sessions with Palestinian Participants

According to the Palestinian team members, the fact that Israelis failed to issue the necessary traveling permits, although there was no security pretext involved, was an indication of some of the daily problems the conflict entailed for them. The absence of two Palestinian team members reflected the political reality of occupation: Palestinians depended on Israeli government policy even with regard to their free movement. Further, the Palestinian participants hoped



to be able to talk to the other side in an open way, despite the fact that they were not in a symmetrical position.

In a next step, the third party asked the Palestinian team how they viewed recent political developments with regard to the conflict and their own situation.

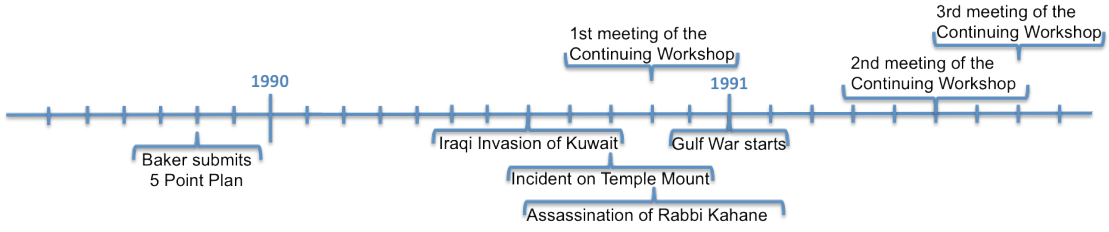
The Palestinians described the situation as having changed from being one in which they felt they could achieve something in cooperation with others to one in which they started to feel having less and less impact on the process. They said that during the *Intifada*[H1] a lot of dialogue groups had been active and Palestinians participated in these groups because they felt, that they could contribute something to a future solution. They described the current political atmosphere as being very hostile and as leaving them with the impression that their participation in the workshops would not become part of a wider dialogue.

The third party then asked them what they thought to bee the turning points that provoked that change in the political atmosphere.

The Palestinian participants named the *Gulf Crisis*[H2], the election of the Likud party as the dominant force in the Israeli government, and the consequent defeat of the Labor party's pro-peace policy after the Gulf Crisis as such turning points. Also, they explained that they were shocked about the

[H1] *The Intifada or 'the shaking off' of ongoing occupation erupted on December 8th, 1987 (Tessler, 1994).*

[H2] *On August 2nd 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, and caused unlimited international attention as well as serious diplomatic effort, headed by the US government, to deter further aggression and restore Kuwaiti sovereignty (Garnham, 1995).*

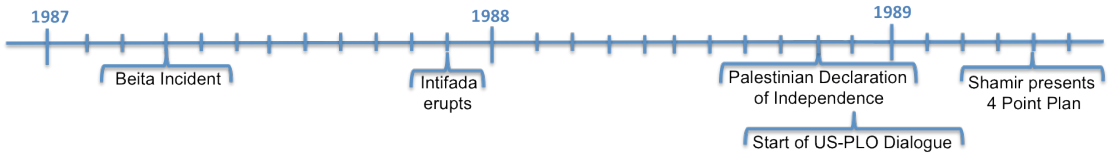


Israeli reaction as well as about the reaction of governments supporting the peace process, like the US, towards the Gulf Crisis and more particularly towards the Palestinian stand on the Gulf Crisis. They felt that the Israelis as well as other countries completely misunderstood the Palestinian position.

The third party then asked the Palestinian group members to explain in what way they felt misunderstood by the Israelis.

The Palestinian participants responded that Israeli judgments of Palestinian position seemed to be based on media pictures of demonstrations in Amman, Galilee and the West Bank and not on PLO publications. They explained that Arafat had actually tried to intervene in the conflict by using his good offices to help restore the sovereignty of Kuwait. The misperception of the Palestinian stand on the issue started to form during the Arab Summit held in Cairo before the Kuwaiti annexation, when no consensus could be reached among the countries present about their reaction to the situation. There were several voting procedures during which the PLO voted against the deployment of forces in Saudi Arabia. Conversely, Egyptian media portrayed the behavior of the PLO as demonstrating support for the annexation. What was misunderstood was that the PLO was opposed to a military solution not because they supported Saddam Hussein but because they hoped to achieve a negotiated solution.

Further, Palestinian participants explained that the demonstrations in the Occupied Territories were portrayed as an expression of support for the invasion of Kuwait. In reality, however, they were an expression of frustration, triggered by a number of events. For instance, Palestinians were disappointed by the behavior of the US administration after the failure of *James Baker's Five*

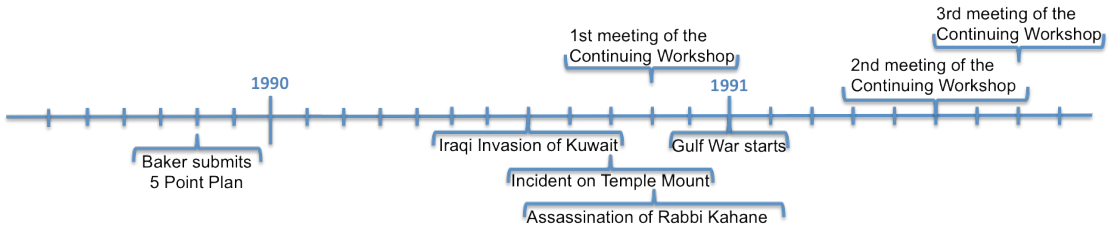


Point Plan[H3]. Palestinians were frustrated about the fact that the US failed to bring Israel to the negotiation table. Further Palestinians in the Occupied Territories were very upset about the lack of UN measures in response to the *events on Temple Mount*[H4], during which several people were killed. The PLO asked the UN Mission in the Occupied Territories to find a way to secure the safety of Palestinians. The Resolutions of the Security Council on that behalf were vetoed by the US seven times and for the last time just two days before the Arab Summit was held.

Palestinian group members held, that the reaction of their constituency towards the Gulf Crisis had to be seen as an expression of their deep frustration about the US negligence of the situation in the Occupied Territories vis-à-vis their immediate reaction against the occupation of Kuwait. They elucidated that the Palestinian stand towards the Gulf Crisis was not one of support for Saddam Hussein but one of protest against the US. Further, Palestinians were looking for Arab help after three years of Intifada, Iraq was just one possibility

[H3] *The US Secretary of State, James Baker, submitted a Five Point Plan to Israel and Egypt on November 1st, 1989. The plan was an attempt to support foregoing attempts of Israel and Egypt to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and to solve some of its obstructions. (Lukacs, 1992: 133). The newly formed government by Shamir in June 1990 rejected the Baker Plan.*

[H4] *On October 8 1990, a serious incident occurred on Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Jewish worshippers at the Western Wall were attacked by stones and pieces of iron hurled by Arabs from Temple Mount. Police reinforcements were charged by Arab youths and fired at the attackers. In the course of the rioting 20 Arabs were killed and 53 injured. The entire Moslem world reacted sharply to these events and demanded that the Secretary General of the UN send a mission to Jerusalem to investigate the events. Security Council Resolution 672 condemned Israel, referred to Jerusalem as occupied territory, and approved a UN mission to the region (United Nations, 1990).*



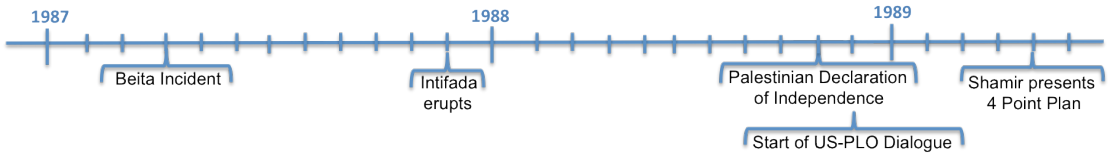
for obtaining that. Also, Palestinians saw the US action against Iraq as an attempt to destroy a military power that had been posing a threat to Israel. The US behavior was therefore seen as an act of support towards Israel and hence against the Palestinians. Combined with the loss of influence of the Labor party, in whom the Palestinians saw an ally for their cause, the situation led the Palestinians to lean towards Iraq as being a last possibility for gaining support for their cause.

The third party then asked the Palestinian participants about their concerns and wishes with regard to the future of the peace process.

The Palestinian participants voiced their whish to develop concrete measures to end the occupation. They said they were not looking for unrealistic commitments but for positions that could be represented by the Israelis workshop participants. Further, they talked about the Israeli oblivion of the living conditions the occupation forced upon a great number of Palestinians. They wanted to hear how Israelis felt about Palestinians not being able to get exit visas. Also, they were eager to find possibilities for bringing the reality of the occupation on the international political agenda with regard to the Geneva Conventions of which Israel was a signatory.

Pre-workshop Sessions with Israeli Participants

On the Israeli side, the first reaction to the travel difficulties of the two Palestinian participants consisted of comments about general bureaucratic delays. Later on in the discussion, however, the Israeli party showed signs of concern about the situation of the Palestinian group. They realized that it was



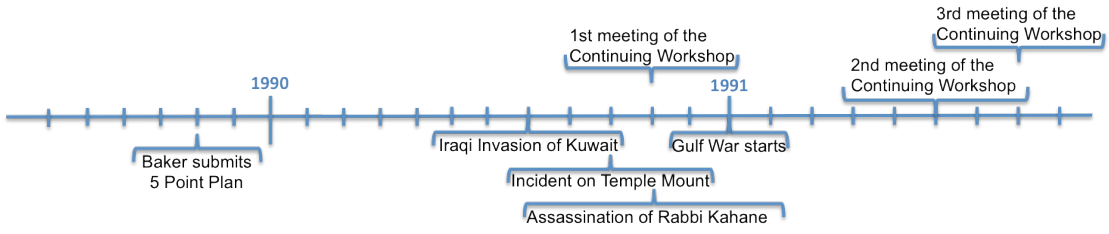
questionable whether the Palestinian group would be complete at the occasion of the next meeting. The participants wondered how Palestinians might feel about the fact that they are a team of three facing an Israeli team of six. The Israeli party then discussed that they should try to find ways of enabling missing Palestinians to participate in the next meeting.

The Third party then asked the Israeli team to talk about how recent events had influenced their situation.

The Israeli participants identified the following four political developments as being of major importance: (1) the Gulf Crisis; (2) the *Abu al-Abbas raid* and the end to the *US-PLO dialogue*[H5];

[H5] *The US-PLO dialogue had started in December 1988 following the adoption of two major documents by the Palestinian National Council (the legislative body of the PLO) on November 15th, 1988. The documents comprised a Palestinian Declaration of Independence proclaiming the establishment of the independent state of Palestine and a Political Program elaborating on the objectives of the declaration. The documents seemed to content the US policy formulated by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in 1975, which refused to recognize or negotiate with the PLO until they would recognize Israel's right to exist and accept Security Council Resolution 242 and 338. More so, the Declaration represented a historical compromise of great significance. By calling for a two-state solution and for peaceful coexistence of the two neighboring states and the two peoples, the Palestinians accepted the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as an ultimate objective. However, the documents remained unclear about the acceptance of the UN Resolutions and renouncement on terrorism, and did not explicitly recognize the existence of Israel. The US asked the PLO for further clarification. One month later, at a press conference that followed a still vague address to the UN General Assembly in Geneva, Yasser Arafat clearly stated what the Declaration had only implied. The public pledge of the PLO's policy change was sufficient to remove existing ambiguities and led the US to engage in a dialogue with the PLO.*

The dialogue process was only of a short duration. On May 30 1990, the Palestine Liberation Front (a small faction backed by Iraq) led by Abu al-Abbas



(3) the events on Temple Mount, and (4) the *assassination of Rabbi Meir Kahane*[H6].

Some Israeli team members rated the Gulf war as playing a positive role and having a sobering effect because it supposedly eliminated unrealistic hopes among those associated with the left wing. Others opposed that and voiced that they were shocked about the Palestinian reaction to the invasion of Kuwait and Saddam Hussein's threats. Some Israeli participants felt that it was detrimental for the Palestinians to join the Iraqi camp and speak against Kuwait who had been supporting the Palestinians for a long time. In fact they saw this move towards Baghdad as having happened even earlier than the actual invasion. They rated the Gulf Crisis and the Palestinian reaction to it as being very detrimental for the peace process.

The Temple Mount incident and the Kahane affair were described as having aggravated the conflict and as being very dangerous in the sense that

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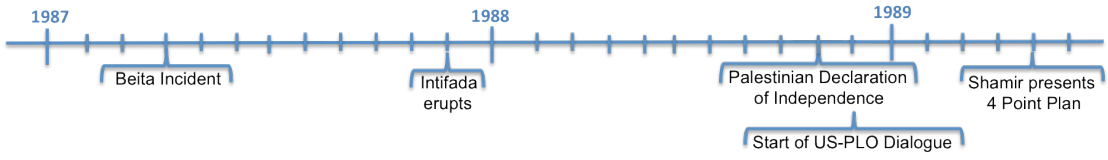
embarked on an operation launching six boats with armed personnel off Israel's coast. Israeli forces captured the group, after the latter had landed on Israeli shores but before it had carried out its mission. The US considered the attempt a terrorist attack and demanded the PLO to condemn it and expel Abu al-Abbas from the PLO's executive committee. As the PLO refused to answer any of these demands, President Bush ordered the suspension of the US-PLO dialogue (Rabie, 1995).

[H6] *Meir David Kahane was an American Orthodox Rabbi with strong nationalist and religious views proclaiming that the Jewish people was intended by God's will to annex the Palestinian territories a land inhabited by disparate Arab clans with no distinct ethnic identity. He founded the Jewish Defense League, a political movement in the US engaged in militant activities and Kach a political party in Israel. In 1984, Kach gained one seat in the Knesset and Rabbi Kahane served for a short while as a member of the Knesset. In 1986, Kach was declared a racist party by the Israeli government and banned from the Knesset. In 1994, the Kach movement was outlawed*



they introduced a religious element into a political conflict. Responsibility for what had happened at the Temple Mount was attributed to the Israeli government for not being sensitive enough to develop awareness about how critical the issues associated with the Temple Mount are and how little it takes to cause a serious escalation.

The Kahane affair unleashed fanatic emotions of a small but dangerous group. It created a lot of hatred against the Arabs. Some Israeli participants feared that the conflict was moving into a new phase in which the *Green Line*[H7] would be closed and free movement for the Palestinians between the Occupied Territories and Israel would be prohibited or only allowed with special permits.

The third party asked the participants about their most prominent concerns and their wishes for the future.

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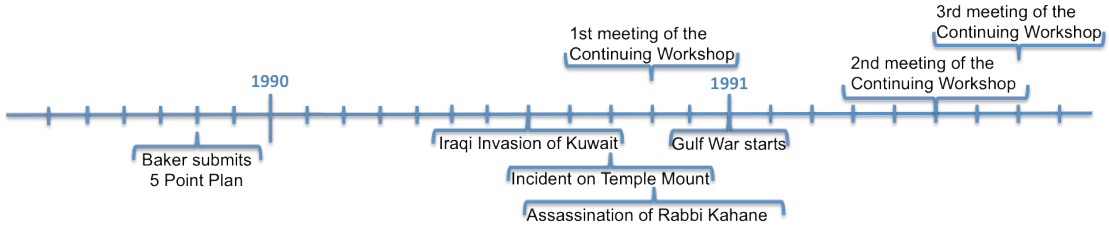
completely. On November 5 1990, Kahane was assassinated by El Sayyid Nosair after concluding a speech in a hotel in New York (the Jewish Virtual Library).

[H7] *The term Green Line originally referred to the 1949 Armistice lines established between Israel, Syria, Jordan and Egypt at the end of the 1948-1949 Arab-Israeli War. After the 1967 War, during which Israel captured and occupied territories outside the Armistice lines where over a million Palestinians including refugees from the 1948 War lived, the Green Line became the administrative border between the Occupied Territories and the Israeli side.*

There are a number of exceptions to this, like Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Territories. In 1967, East Jerusalem – ruled by Jordan until then – was annexed into Israel and considered to be sovereign Israeli territory, a conception that was reinforced by the Basic Jerusalem Law of 1980. Arab inhabitants of East Jerusalem were given permanent residency status. The Golan Heights have been informally annexed with the Golan Heights Law in 1981 extending Israeli jurisdiction to the territory. Also Israeli Settlements are treated as being subject to Israeli state law rather than to its military or laws of the Palestinian National Authority (Newman, 1995).

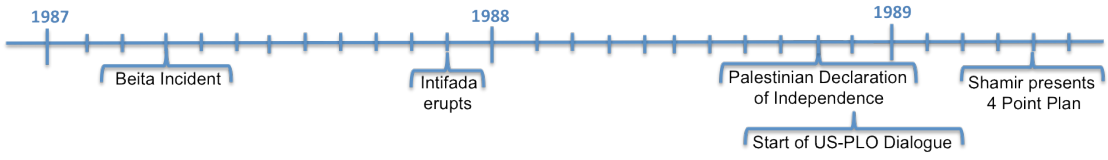


The Israeli participants voiced their deep disappointment and even despair about the situation at hand. Some of them had a feeling that real change had taken place between the negotiations in Geneva and Stockholm – not just a change of heart, but also a change of policy. There used to be a general assumption among the Israeli political left that a Palestinian state would set an end to the conflict. Now, there was a feeling that the Palestinians living in East Jerusalem followed the same course as the ones in the West Bank, who had been advocating the Intifada. Israeli participants lamented that they did not feel safe in any part of the city anymore, not even in West Jerusalem. The incidents began to involve Israelis on a personal level. The Israeli participants went on to say that this experiences put the Israelis in the same situation in which the Palestinians found themselves, namely to live in a constant state of fear.

Reflections

During the pre-workshop sessions, each party was able to present their positions and get some of their grievances and concerns off their chests. It further enabled participants to get to know the other members of their own group and to develop a certain degree of group cohesion. Both are favourable for the proceeding of a workshop and enable participants to engage in a joint exploration of new ideas.

For the third party, the pre-workshop sessions were important for the purpose of observing reflections of political realities in the statements of participants, like leadership structures, range of opinions and tolerance for internal dissent. The observations enable the third party to understand processes that might become active between the conflict groups during the joint

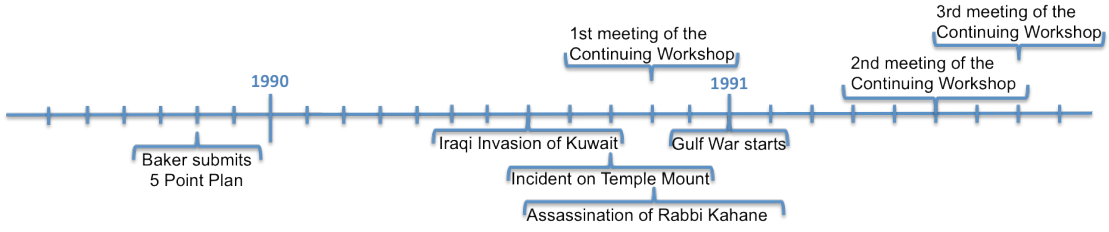


discussion sessions and helped them to choose appropriate topics for theoretical presentations at the start of plenary discussions.

Joint Workshop Sessions

The first workshop session, in which both parties took part, was opened by short introductions of all participants. Then, the third party proposed to explore the deterioration of trust that had occurred during the past months and to attempt to rebuild it by applying a three-step procedure. In a first step, the Palestinians were asked to tell their Israeli counterparts how they experienced recent events, how they perceived Israeli reactions to those events, and explain what discouraged or threatened them about Israeli reactions. During this phase Israelis were asked to listen only and not to interrupt the Palestinian participants except for necessary explications. The third party explained that it was vital for both groups to attain complete comprehension of the other's viewpoints. In a second step, it would be up to the Israelis to talk about how they perceived the situation, the Palestinian reaction to it, and what upset or disappointed them about their actions. The Palestinians were, of course, also told to just listen and only ask for clarifications in order to make sure that they fully understood the others' points. In a third step, there would be room for both sides to engage in an open discussion of the issues that had been mentioned by both groups.

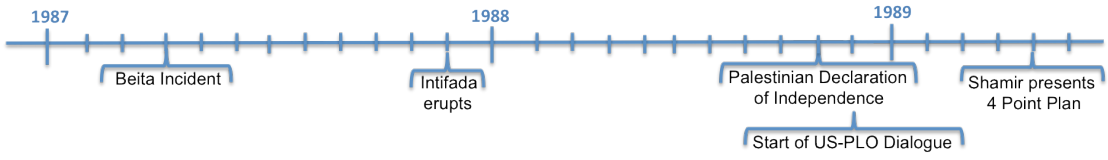
At first there were some objections to the procedure, especially from the Palestinian side. Participants felt they would be cast in opposing groups if one side had to listen to an overwhelming amount of complaints of the adversary.



They suggested that participants on each side should alternate with giving their view of the situation. The third party then explained that this would result in asking each other questions, which would lead into a chaotic discussion and that it was therefore better to listen to each party's point of view separately.

The Palestinians started to give their view of the conflict situation by portraying the Palestinian reaction to the Gulf Crisis as the main point that had caused renewed rupture between the two parties. They felt that the broadcast of Arafat embracing Saddam Hussein caused an extreme reaction among Israelis in general. Palestinian participants thought that Israelis took on the view that Palestinians could no longer be a dialogue-partner for them because they took sides with Iraq. They explained that this view of the Israelis was distorted. And that it was not the case that Palestinians were in favor of the Kuwait invasion. What was true, was that they felt strongly against the West and felt closer to Saddam Hussein, who symbolized an Arab partner whom they were looking for. Further, they felt that Israelis portrayed the Palestinians as being in favor of Iraq because they were seeking for an excuse to back out from the peace process.

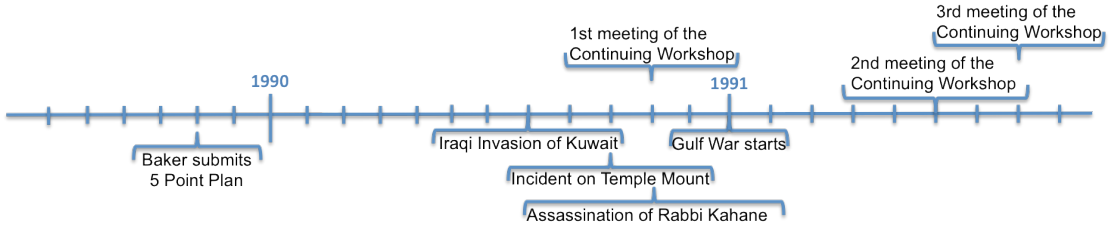
Conversely, the Palestinian participants said that the PLO had to take part of the blame that Israelis had a distorted perception of the Palestinians. They described that there were Palestinians who had continuously urged the PLO to adopt an unambiguous language and define in clear terms of how they viewed their relationship with Israel and its right to exist. They named the Declaration of Independence of 1988 as representing a decisive instance in this effort. The Declaration expressed the Palestinian struggle of trying to give up on the aim of correcting the past and taking on the objective of building a better



future instead. Nonetheless, they described the PLO as having failed to crystallize the Declaration into specific actions. The PLO did not manage to commit to a particular political position that would direct the Palestinian fate in the right direction; all they did was to react to given situations but never managed to act on behalf of their constituency. The inadequate representation of their political leadership and the stagnation of their struggle greatly frustrated Palestinians.

The Palestinian participants explained that the reaction to the Gulf Crisis had to bee seen in light of the general situation of the Palestinian people. Being inadequately represented by their own political leadership, having lost the support of the Labor party as their partner in the Israeli government, after the National Unity coalition fell, and being extremely disappointed of US reactions, they felt that they had no ally left to support their cause. The Palestinian reaction had to be understood as being an objection to the US sending troops to Kuwait and not as an approval of the Invasion of Kuwait or a veneration of Saddam Hussein.

According to the Palestinian participants, the misreading of Palestinian actions and the abrupt Israeli backsliding led to a mutual monolithic view amongst the members of each side. The Palestinians started to see the Israelis as one block and felt that all of them reverted to the view that Palestinians did not form a distinct group, but built a homogenous block with all Arab nations. This represented enormous regression from previously attained developments and led Palestinians to doubt whether Israelis had ever been serious about what they said during prior negotiations.

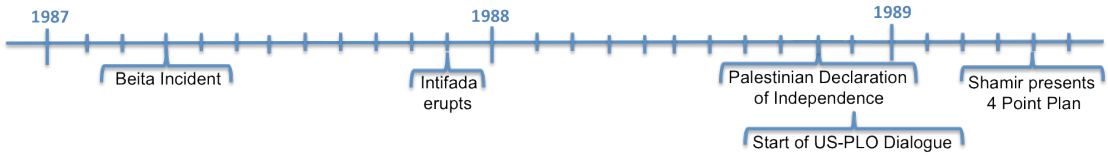


In addition to that, Palestinian participants felt that past developments had added a religious component to the conflict, developments that culminated in the assassination of Kahane. This caused further erosion of trust and communication between the two sides. Palestinian participants described the October massacre on Temple Mount as expressing, once more, Palestinian frustration. Palestinians were of the view that if the US wanted to be taken seriously again in terms of having a real interest in helping the region, it would have to come up with a concrete way of how to engender a process that would lead to Palestinian self-determination. Otherwise, the region would remain stuck in a situation of intercommunal conflict in which one massacre would lead to another.

Israeli participants then asked the Palestinians to say more about the impact the Intifada had on the Palestinian situation.

The Palestinians explained that the Intifada had improved their situation, because it made Israelis realize that the Palestinians were indeed a people. This was a true shift in perception. In response to that, the PLO agreed to talk to Israelis who believed in a two-state solution. Palestinians felt extremely disappointed that no concrete actions resulted form that dialogue. Unlike the Palestinians, the Israelis were unable to transfer their shift in perception to political grounds. The Palestinian participants explained that this disappointment decisively caused the PLO position during the Gulf Crisis.

The Israeli group then asked for further clarification about what they expected from the Israelis in concrete terms.



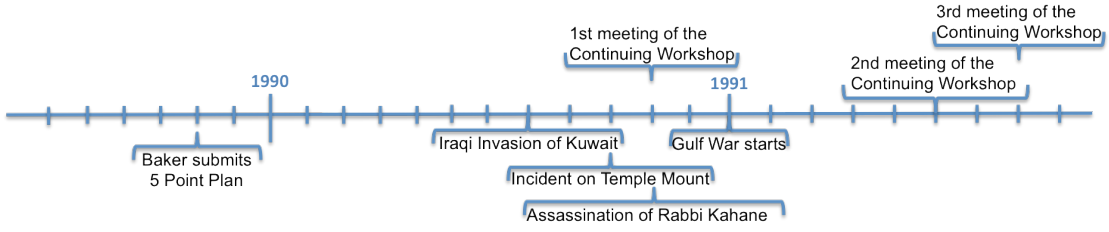
Palestinian team members gave the example of Ezer Weitzman who had agreed to meet with the PLO but who was not able to publicly admit that he engaged in talks for the advancement of an Israeli-Palestinian peace. Instead he had to apologize for it and justify what he had done. This showed the incapacity of translating progress that had been made on a grass-root level into acts of the political elite.

The Palestinian participants admitted that they faced similar problems within their political community and compared an Israeli with a Palestinian situation. In both cases, a political group from the fringe was able to sabotage peace initiatives. They took the view that Kahane's group dragged Israel into a position it did not choose. For the Palestinians the Beita[H8] incident triggered a snowball reaction in the West Bank and managed to hijack PLO initiatives.

Israeli participants asked the Palestinian team what their stand was on the fall of the National Unity coalition and the loss of the pro-peace parties' in the Israeli government.

[H8] *On April 6 1988, a group of adolescent Israeli settlers went on a hike in the hills through Palestinian villages following a call of their settler community to assert their fearlessness of the Intifada and their right to the land. The rout of the group took them past the village of Beita where villagers gathered on a hillside to watch. After a while gunshots were directed at the crowd and killed one 15-year old Israeli girl, two Palestinians and wounded several people. The Israeli army believed that the girl had been killed by one of the Palestinians and entered the village to demolish 14 homes.*

On April 11, three residents of Beita, who were involved in the incident, were deported to Lebanon.Weeks later, Israeli ballistics tests revealed that all three victims had been killed by the Israeli guard of the group, a young man with a history of mental illness and violence, who had opened fire. The Israeli was never brought to trial and the homes remained demolished (Svirsky, 2006).



The Palestinian participants responded that they still wanted political recognition of the PLO as the representative of the entire Palestinian people and not just of the population living in the Occupied Territories.

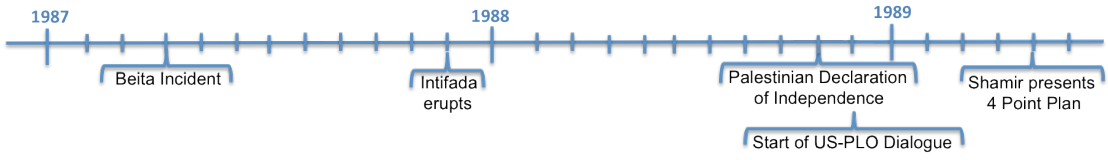
The third party then suggested moving on to the second phase in which Israelis were asked to give their view of the situation.

The Israeli analysis of the situation at hand contained two major points with regard to their own stand as well as two points about how they viewed the Palestinian position. For one, some of the Israeli participants said they felt that the Peace Process was not weaken because of the Gulf Crisis but because their government did not accept the Baker plea. Some of them said that the Israeli government reached an impasse because they did not have a solution for the Palestinian Diaspora. Secondly, they voiced their very real and deep-rooted fear of losing their existence, which built up as a characteristic of their history. They confirmed that this concern was the reason why Israel has aimed at appearing invulnerable. It was a way to assuage their great fear.

With regard to how they viewed the Palestinian role, the Israeli participants articulated their feeling that Palestinians had done little to alleviate this fear. Some of the Israeli participants stated that they were aware of Palestinians proclaiming to wipe Israel off the map.

Other Israeli participants, however, reminded the group that this was not the case for the majority of the Palestinians. Still, Israelis felt that even the Palestinians who were pro-peace did not sufficiently respond to their fear.

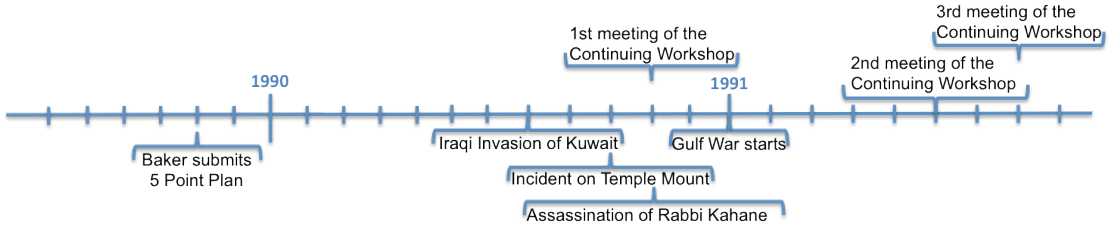
The Israeli participants explained that the fear of losing their existence was aggravated by the Temple Mount incident. Israelis felt that the atmosphere



both in their own as well as in the Palestinian community had taken on an explosive character and had deteriorated to the extent that just about anything could cause a riot. The turmoil surrounding the incident led to a lot of rumors about the intentions on either side and ultimately aggravated the distortion of how each side portrayed the other. Even more so, it added a fanatic religious component to the conflict.

Another occurrence that aggravated Israeli fear consisted in the perceived Palestinian support of Iraq in response to the Gulf Crisis. The Israeli participants made it clear that they understood to a certain degree that Palestinian support for the Iraqi leader stemmed from the fact that Saddam Hussein represented a psychological remedy for the Palestinian situation. Israelis acknowledged that the demonstrated support did not come from the political leadership, who in a first instance condemned the invasion, but from the people on the street. What scared Israelis was that the leadership did not seem to control the masses but quite the other way around, just as it was the case with regard to the Mount Temple incident. Israeli participants, hence, feared that extremists were taking over the situation and marginalized previous efforts.

Secondly, many Israeli participants felt that Palestinians presented themselves in a disjointed way. They found PLO statements, which had been published since the 1988 Declaration, to be too complicated and legalistic. Israelis did not feel addressed by the PLO statements but viewed the statements as being addressed above all to the US and Europe.



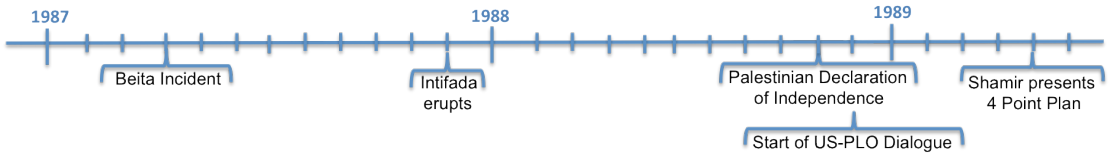
Reflections

The initial phase of mutual presentations took off well, considering the disturbing events that preceded the beginning of the Continuing Workshop. Not only did both parties listen to each other, they also started to respond towards their counterpart's statements in a cautiously empathic way. This surfaced, when Israeli participants included the voiced Palestinian concerns in their political situation report. They expressed understanding of the Palestinian support for Iraq in terms of constituting a psychological sustenance and demonstrated their awareness about the Palestinian leadership's initial condemnation of the invasion of Kuwait.

The discussion about the concrete facts of the Gulf Crisis, although they had a bearing on the conflict situation, did not directly touch on long held interests or grievances that were at the heart of the conflict. This allowed participants to test the readiness to listen to each other and to find out whether the other side was able to understand their own situation and the underlying motivations of their own convictions.

The fact that both parties were able to engage in a process of open communication and active listening so swiftly, can be seen as testifying to the impact IPS and other dialogue methods had on developing cadres of individuals across conflict lines. Such cadres developed through individuals, who became convinced of the necessity of talking to the other side, and who developed enough working-trust to communicate their view of things to each other.

More so, each side was able to see itself in a differentiated way by acknowledging some of their shortcomings and taking some blame for the

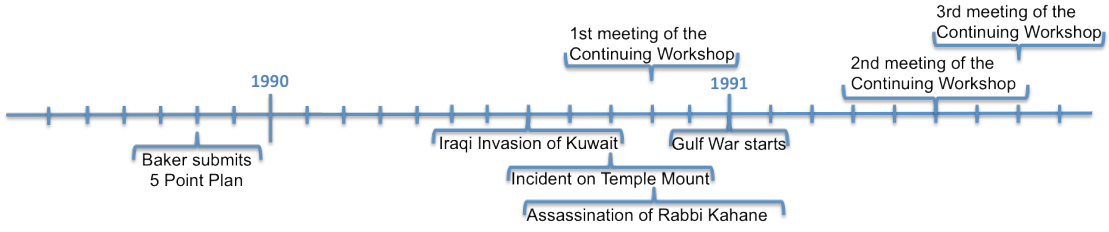


difficulties they were presented with. Palestinian participants readily acknowledged that part of the distorted perceptions derived from the ambiguous language employed by their leadership and their lack of committing to an explicit position.

The Israeli participants on their part put partial blame for the impasse of the peace process on their government, who had failed to positively respond to the Baker initiative. By saying that the Temple Mount incident aggravated their fear of losing their existence touched on the very heart of their identity needs, at a very early stage of the workshop discussions.

Further, the parties discovered that they shared the concern that the conflict took on a new religious dimension. The latter had forced a dynamic onto the conflict that neither community wanted to be faced with and had caused a lot of fear about violent outbreaks on each side. It was important for the representatives of each conflict party to see that they had a shared concern. The open display of how their communities had experienced recent events also triggered aggressiveness resulting from each party's long held frustrations about not being heard by the other side, which further unfolded in consecutive sessions.

When in a subsequent session, the group started a quarrel about asymmetries between the conflict parties. Israeli participants stated that Palestinians were always asking Israelis for concessions for the purpose of attaining independence, while Israelis wanted nothing from the Palestinians. The statement enraged Palestinian participants, who angrily answered that

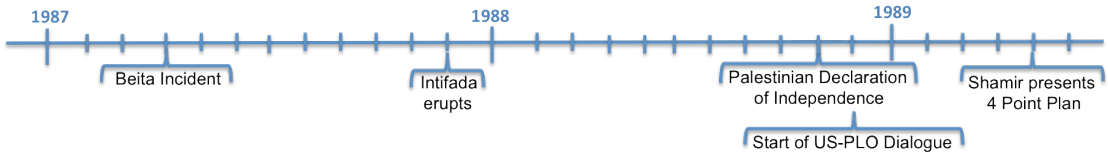


Palestinians *did* have something to offer which Israel needed, namely legitimacy in the Arab world.

The third party intervened by asking all participants to consider the fact that Palestinians and Israelis were not two completely separate entities without any contact, but that there was a relationship between them. No matter whether their relationship was good or bad, constructive or destructive, it was characterized by a dynamic of interactions of various kinds. Failure to view the existence of that relationship would result in the loss of a number of opportunities to change the nature of it. The third party asked the participants to keep that point in mind and return to a discussion about concrete issues that represented obstacles to a possible peace process.

The participants then approached the question of the linkage between the Gulf Crisis and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. While discussing a number of issues concerning the Gulf Crisis, each party managed to explain their view of things and gain understanding from the other one. Both sides felt that the Gulf Crisis put an obstacle to the peace process, which they needed to overcome in a joint way. An Israeli participant even voiced that common understanding and pointed out that each time one side was able to communicate their view of a given issue in a way the other side could understand and vice versa, both parties made progress.

The main issue they were trying to tackle was the fact that Palestinian behavior on the street convinced the public in Israel and also in the US and Europe that Palestinians were siding with Saddam Hussein. Even if the Israeli workshop participants now understood why and how this perception came about and that it was not what it seemed to be, the issue still remained a major



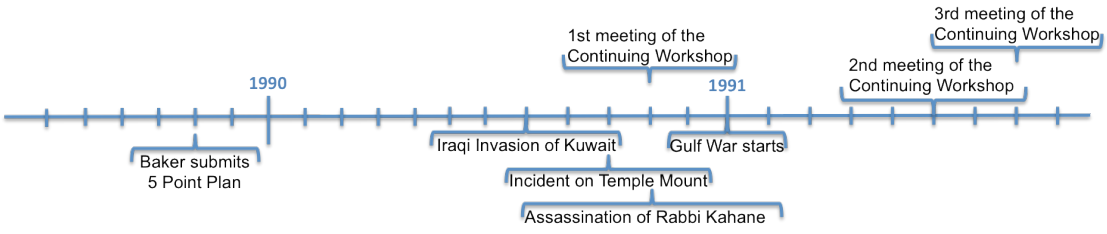
obstacle to the peace process. An Israeli participant explained that Israelis could not be convinced of making concessions to Palestinians sitting in a boat with Saddam Hussein because Iraq was perceived as posing a major threat to Israel. Further, they reminded everybody about statements made by Arafat that Iraq would attack Israel militarily.

Palestinian group members replied that it was Israeli behavior that led them to a seemingly pro Iraqi position. Palestinians felt that Israelis had promised them to make concessions if they accepted *UN Resolutions 242 and 338*[H9]. However, Palestinian acceptance of the Resolutions did not change anything nor did it bring about a clear statement from the Labor Party.

Israeli participants conveyed their complete understanding of the Palestinian perception of that matter. In their view the Palestinian acceptance of

[H9] *The UN Security Council Resolution 242 was adopted on 22 November 1967 after the war in June when Israel had attacked Syria, Egypt and Jordan and occupied Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The Resolution condemned the acquisition of Territory by war. Further, it required withdrawal of Israel's armed forces from the Occupied Territories, the termination of all belligerent claims, and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area.*

The UN Security Council Resolution 338 was adopted on 22 October 1973 shortly before the war ended that had been initiated by joint Syrian and Egyptian attacks on Israel on Yom Kippur, the day of Atonement, being the most important holiday in the Jewish calendar. The Resolution demanded all parties to the fighting to cease military activity, to implement Resolution 242 and to engage in negotiations concurrently with the cease-fire (United Nations, 1967 and 1973). The Declaration of Independence and its accompanying Political Program explicitly mentioned acceptance of Resolution 242 and thereby implicitly acknowledged the pre-1967 state borders of Israel.



the Resolutions did change a lot. It allowed Israelis to substantially think about negotiations with Palestinians. Still, the Israelis made it clear that Palestinians and their political leadership needed to publicly distance themselves from Saddam Hussein in order to move on with the peace process.

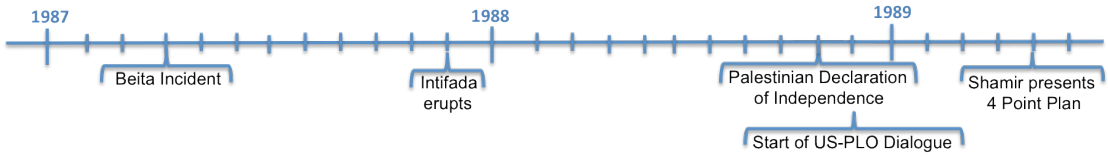
Palestinians then explained that the Israelis misunderstood Arafat's statements about the attacks against Israel. It was not Arafat who supported a military attack of Israel; he only acted as a postman delivering the Iraqi message to the Israelis.

The third party picked up on the two points and asked the Palestinians whether they felt that their reaction to the Gulf Crisis would have been different if the Labor Party had committed itself more openly to the Palestinian peace initiative. They explained to them that the Palestinian portrayal of things had made it difficult for Israelis to accept that Arafat only acted as a postman delivering an Iraqi message.

The Palestinian group members showed understanding for that. The Israeli party replied that not all weight should be put on the support of the Labor party. They were of the view that in order to reach stability, Labor and parts of Likud needed to be in support of the peace initiative. It should therefore be the aim of Palestinians and Israelis to achieve a more balanced support for peace.

The third party then raised the question of how to influence public opinion and asked the participants to discuss this topic in a bifocal way.

The Palestinian team voiced problems with their leadership. Although they felt that the PLO did not fully represent them, the organization still

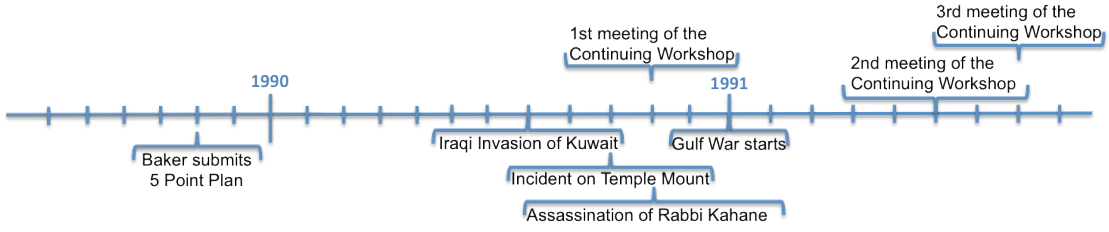


controlled everything. They continued to explain that the PLO and its head Arafat were not able to deliver what many Palestinians would want to be implemented.

Israeli participants showed understanding of that situation. They drew attention to the fact that the Palestinian participants were better placed than the Israeli participants in terms of influencing their community and leadership, as some of them were linked to the PLO. Some of the Israeli participants said they felt that none of them were directly representing their government. Other Israeli participants countered that they could all be seen as political actors, as they were all potentially able to influence their community. In response to that there emerged agreement within the Israeli group that they could try to achieve something by publishing written items as well as through activities in their academic or socio-political environment.

Reflections

The third party intervention, that stopped the polemic debate about which party had more to offer to the other, brought the conversation back to the level of a real dialogue. The third party reminded the two groups that their actions were interconnected and that they were bound to each other by a relationship no matter how conflicting it may be. By recognizing the existence of their relationship, the parties could seize a chance to change the *nature* of that relationship. The third party used that input to redirect the discussion towards concrete points that had influenced the situation of their conflict (and hence their relationship). By discussing concrete factors of their political



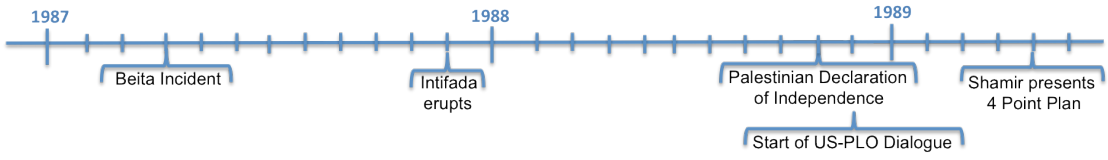
reality, the two parties were able to approach underlying issues that had caused their current situation.

The intervention of the third party alluded to a central component of the identity formation process by pointing out that the actions of one party influence the actions of the other party. The intervention was successful and led the group to make real progress in analyzing how their actions of the past two years had influenced their relationship. Palestinian participants pointed to a major change in the identity of their people by referring to the content of the 1988 documents and to their implicit acceptance of the state of Israel within the Green Line. The implicit acceptance of the Israeli state represented not only a decisive identity change but also a major concession of the Palestinian polity, a concession they did not feel to be reciprocated by the Israelis.

The Israeli reply showed a lot of empathy by acknowledging the immense change of perspective of the Palestinians and by confirming that this concession *did* have an impact on Israeli public opinion, as it made the public receptive for the objective of engaging in a peace process, even though this change was not always reflected in political statements.

The statement of the Israeli group members, that their perception of the Palestinian reaction toward the Gulf Crisis had changed through the workshop discussions, shows that the method had fulfilled its aim of opening up learning channels to enable the parties to gain insight into the perspective of the other and to integrate new information about the other within their own value system.

In the following session the third party asked participants to jointly think about possibilities of how Palestinians would be able to detach themselves from

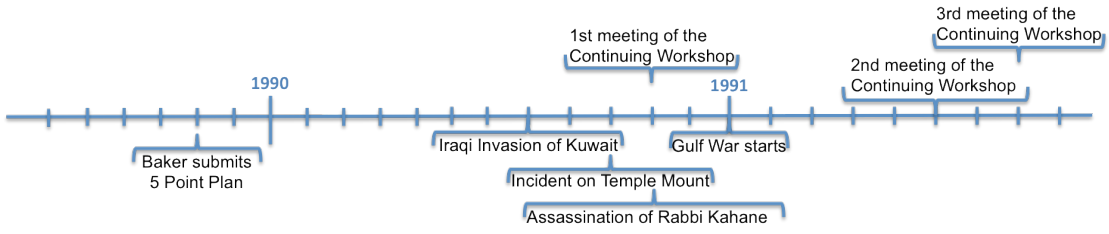


their perceived linkage with Saddam Hussein; as well as about possibilities of how Israel could send a signal of their renewed commitment to the peace process.

Israeli participants illustrated a misunderstanding between Israelis and Palestinians about their mutual readiness to engage in negotiations. Palestinians seemed to need certain concessions from the Israeli side before they would feel comfortable to engage in negotiations and seemed to be thinking that Israelis were not ready to make these concessions and were thus not willing to negotiate. Israelis, on the other hand, felt that they could not commit to a given concession before they did not know its consequences. What the Israelis needed was to engage in an open-ended negotiation. Open-ended did not refer to uncertainty of *whether* the Israelis would commit at all, but to *how* they would commit to a given concession.

Israeli participants confirmed that they understood an open-ended discussion to be a theoretical exercise in which models for solutions – that would entail concessions – were discussed. This would provide them with insight into the plausibility of future scenarios and give them the necessary confidence to commit to actual negotiations and make concessions to the Palestinians. The Israeli participants explained, that to think Israelis would *a priori* be unready to make concessions would be to misunderstand the Israeli point of view; all they needed was a gradual process to create an atmosphere in which things that seemed to be impossible would become possible.

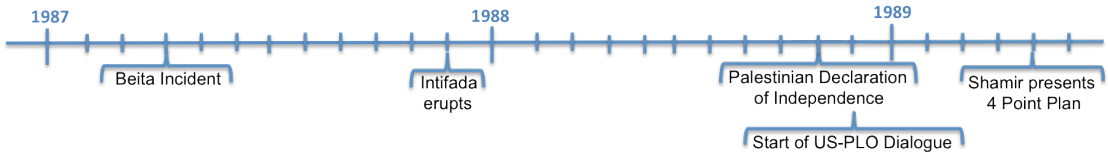
Some Israeli participants then commented on the quarrel with Palestinian participants during the preceding session about the unequal nature



of their relationship. The Israeli participants apologized for the previous remarks about Palestinians having nothing to offer to the Israelis. They affirmed that the truth was that they both needed each other. The only thing that was different for each of them was their motivations and the obstacles they faced. Israeli participants suggested that the Palestinians should improve their situation by organizing elections of a representative body that the international community would recognize and that they should not hesitate to ask for Israeli help to achieve that.

Other Israeli participants supported the apology and raised attention to the fact that both parties needed to be sensitive towards their respective traumata and fears. They showed understanding of the Palestinian fear that parameters of an interim solution would become permanent. Israeli group members voiced deep concern about recent violent incidence and that they needed confirmation from the Palestinians to take control of extremists' attacks. Israeli participants admitted that they would want to know in advance what the consequences of discussing a given issue would be. Nevertheless, they maintained their view that negotiations needed to be a step-by-step process which would have to lead to an agreement that, very importantly, would have to satisfy both parties and that would be based on realistic mechanisms that would keep the process upright. In any case, the Israeli group members were very clear about the fact that negotiations of solutions would have to lead to Palestinian sovereignty and that this needed to be officially declared to the Palestinian public.

Palestinian participants greeted that statement with decisive approval.

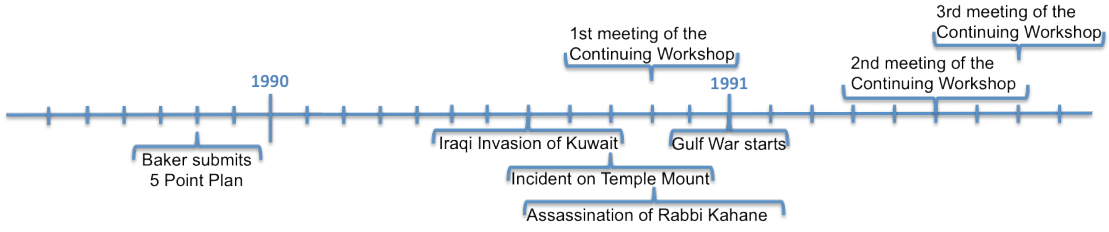


Some of the Israeli participants then said that it would not be possible for the Israeli government to give assurance for the future establishment of a Palestinian state but that only the US would be able to give such an assertion. They further stated that issues like the Palestinian refugee problem and the question about whether or not to divide Jerusalem would be non-starters for future negotiations.

The third party drew attention to the shared need of both parties for the assurance that some parts of a future negotiation process would be known in advance. They raised the questions of what such assertions would entail and what was needed on each side to take the chance of committing themselves to negotiations. They asked participants whether they had ideas of how to formulate what Palestinians asked for without touching on an issue that was a non-starter for Israelis in terms of engaging in negotiations.

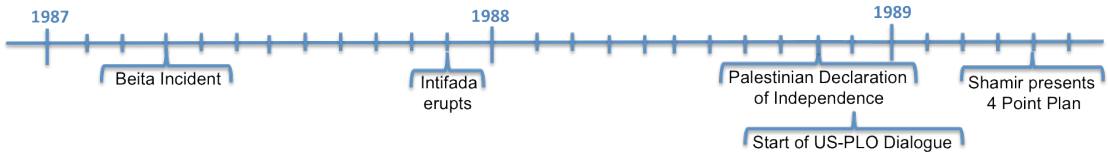
In reaction, Palestinian participants stated that the fewer concessions they received towards building a state, the less assurance they would be able to give to the Israelis. They continued to explain that if there were reasonable expectations of building a Palestinian state, it would be easier to engage in negotiations and give Israelis their needed assurance than if the only expectable option would be to hold municipal elections.

Some Israeli participants replied that they saw difficulties on their part to initiate negotiations that would lead in that direction, they feared it would cause a civil war in Israel, as the public was not ready for a Palestinian state. Others refused that idea and drew parallels to the Egyptian peace process, in which the public had gradually accepted first vague promises.



The Palestinian group then said that the PLO would never negotiate for anything less than a flag, and that the PLO had the commitment of the Palestinian people, as it was the only legitimate body representing them. They continued to explain, that the fact that the Israeli public did not accept the Palestinian need for a state, as was expressed in the disappointing results of *Camp David*[H10], was as much a problem for the Palestinians as for the Israelis and that the Intifada resulted from that lack of acceptance. They further pointed out that if the Israeli participants saw no possibility of convincing the Israeli

[H10] *The Camp David summit meeting was held from September 5th until 17th, 1978. It resulted from diplomatic efforts of the US, Egypt and Israel, which had been spurred by Anwar Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in November 1977. The summit resulted in two documents: the Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Israel and Egypt (signed March, 26, 1979), containing complete Israeli withdrawal from Sinai, and the Framework for Peace in the Middle East, containing new parameters for Palestinian rights and the future of The West Bank and Gaza. The latter document did not contain a commitment of withdrawal from the West Bank or Gaza, but the procedures that would guideline negotiations about a final status of the territories based on UN Resolution 242. It envisioned a maximum five-year transitional period to determine the final status of the West Bank and Gaza, during which its inhabitants were to have "full autonomy" until an administrative authority could be freely elected and the Israeli Military and its Civilian Administration withdrawn. Delegations from Israel, Egypt and Jordan, including Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza, would negotiate how to establish and structure the Palestinian Self-Governing Authority. The views of the negotiating committees differed widely. Egyptian representatives counted the Arab population of East Jerusalem as an integral part of the West Bank and as such entitled to elect the Self-Governing Authority, while Israel saw them as participating in Israeli municipal elections. Further, Egypt wanted a Palestinian legislature and the Authority to levy taxes, regulate land and control water rights, while Israeli representatives called for the creation of an administrative council, with limited executive authority and no possibility for legislative powers. Palestinians interpreted Israel's policy as using their agreement to an autonomy status as a cover to legitimize occupation and to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state (Quandt, 1993).*

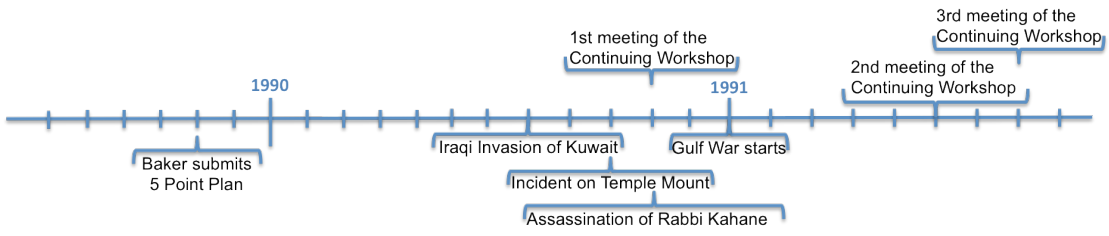


public of that reality, they could not expect the Palestinian participants to convince their public to accept open-ended negotiations.

The Israeli group then asked whether Palestinians did not believe in constructive ambiguity that had worked before.

Palestinian participants answered that they could not compare negotiations with Egypt to negotiations with Palestinians. Egypt was a state while Palestinians lived under occupation or as refugees, which made them feel as second or third class citizens who had to come along under or beside Israel. They explained to the Israeli group that for Palestinians not just larger or narrower borders were at stake but the disappearance of a whole people. Therefore, the only solution was to form a nation state. They illustrated, that after 43 years of struggling, the PLO needed to report back to the Palestinian people that they were able to achieve a solution, not just a process of stages; otherwise violent outbreaks would be the result.

Palestinian participants said that failure to achieve statehood through negotiations would destroy the one thing they had gained, the legitimate institution that they had built after 43 years. If they engaged in an open-ended negotiation process, severe violence could lead to a loss of their leadership. They feared that if Yassir Arafat were to be assassinated there would be no one left on the Palestinian side to sign a peace treaty.



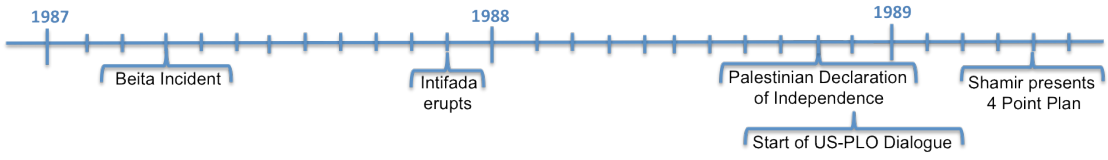
Reflections

The full impact of the third party intervention regarding the interconnectedness of the two parties became visible when Israeli participants apologized for the remark that Palestinians were only requesting concessions without being able to reciprocate something, and acknowledged that they had indeed something to offer and that they both needed each other.

This instance of the Continuing Workshop showed a true alteration in the Israeli identity perception. The participants' initial remark that Palestinians were not able to reciprocate Israeli concessions reflected the status quo conflict perception that one party could only lose by answering demands of the other side. The participants' apology and acknowledgement of the two sides' interdependence showed that they were able to include the other as a cooperative partner who had something to offer.

In the first session of the last day, the third party concluded that many issues that had been set out in the preliminary meetings had been discussed. One item on the list that both parties deemed necessary to pick up in the consecutive discussions was the Intifada and how far it contributed to Palestinian goals as well as to the advancement of a peace process. The third party asked the participants to discuss the topic with regard to advancing the development of practical ideas.

The Palestinian group saw several points in which the Intifada succeeded to achieve progress in the peace process and several in which it failed to do so. First of all, the Intifada managed to change Israeli public opinion in a major way. The Intifada made the Israelis see, who Palestinians

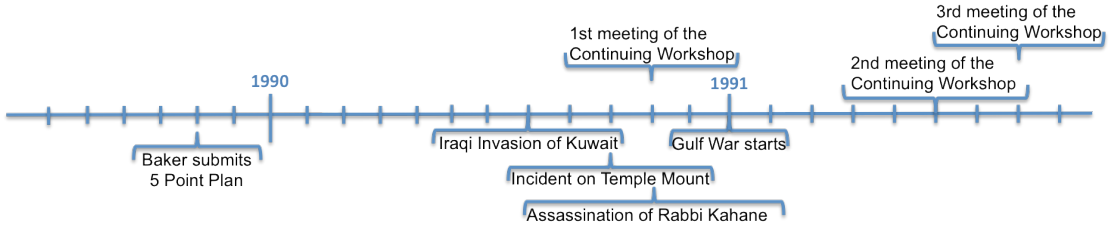


really were and that there was a person behind the mask of the monster, which Israeli myths had put on the Palestinians. The PLO achieved that, by crystallizing their political goals in the 1988 Declaration. The Intifada made Israelis realize that what they were confronted with in the first place was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and not the Israeli-Arab conflict.

This progress raised Palestinian hopes for achieving a political solution that would give them independence. In this respect the Intifada failed, as it did not manage to attain its stated goal of bringing independence to the Palestinian people. Another point, in which the Intifada failed in the eyes of the Palestinian participants, was that it did not manage to make Israel feel responsible for the occupation. The Palestinian group illustrated how extremely difficult it was to live under conditions of occupation. To be confronted with these difficulties every day made it all the more difficult for Palestinians to see that Israelis in general refused to take responsibility.

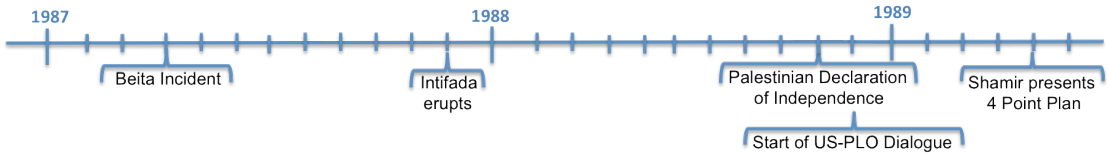
Some Israeli participants readily accepted that and confirmed that they, being part of the Israeli community, acknowledge their responsibility for and the ugliness of the occupation. Other group members did not feel so easy about the issue and asked the Palestinians to explain what they meant with "taking responsibility" and what they expected the Israelis to do concretely, in order for them to see that they were taking responsibility for the occupation.

Palestinian team members replied that they would need Israeli statements that schools should be reopened; or that Israeli soldiers should start to wear identification tags that would allow Palestinians to report to the Israeli government when a soldier mistreated a Palestinian.



Talking about the difficult reality of every day life under occupation caused considerable emotional turbulence and anger among the Palestinian participants. They said that it was impossible for them to sit at a table with Israelis and forget about the horrors of the occupation. Israeli participants represented the occupier and as such the Palestinian enemy, therefore, it cost Palestinian participants an enormous effort to be able to sit and talk to them. The Palestinian group further illustrated that participating in joint talks was almost a psychological absurdity, due to the Israeli law forbidding contact between the two parties. The Palestinian team recognized that they had to live with that reality and that this forced them to be more creative. They said they felt that they were the ones who always had to reach out to the Israelis, while Israelis did not reach out for them. They felt that although they saw Israel as a democratic society within the Green Line borders – and a Palestinian participant even voiced admiration of the ability to establish an Israeli society out of a population coming from all over the world – they resented the fact that Israel claimed all the rights of a democratic society without assuming any of its duties.

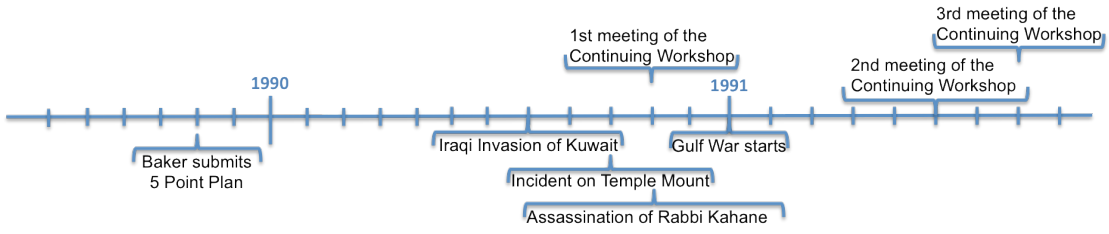
Palestinian group members continued to explain that in order for Israelis to understand the cause of Palestinian violence they needed to see that the Palestinians felt that an enormous injustice had been inflicted on them, a feeling that had been reinforced under occupation. What Palestinians suffered most from under occupation was economic hardship. With the closure of the Green Line it had become impossible for about 10'000 workers to move from their home to their workplace. The occupation made economic development impossible, as not even Arab entrepreneurs in the Gulf wanted to invest in a



Palestinian economy under occupation. An Israeli participant chipped in by confirming to know about the severe economic situation from first-hand experience and that it was necessary to make that reality known to the Israeli public at large.

The Israeli group gave their analysis of the impact of the Intifada on the conflict. They discerned six achievements. First, they were of the view that the Intifada managed to involve local Palestinians, especially people living in the Occupied Territories. Henceforth, local Palestinians began to identify with the PLO and its objectives, which previously almost only had viability in the Palestinian Diaspora. Second, this led to a strengthening of the PLO and led them, pushed by local Palestinians, to formulate the Declaration of Independence. Third, this caused the disengagement of the Palestinian question from Jordan. Fourth, the PLO attained US recognition as being the political body representing the Palestinian people and brought them to engage in a dialogue, which although suspended, was rated as being able to be picked up again on a later stage. Fifth, the Intifada re-established the Green Line. Sixth, the Intifada caused the Israeli government and public to realize that not only Arab states but most of all the Palestinians were the prevalent negotiation partners for establishing peace in the region.

The downsides of the Intifada, according to Israeli participants, included its contribution to an enlargement of the conflict as it began to involve Israeli Arabs (or Palestinians living in Jerusalem and in cities inside the Green Line). Further the Intifada had strengthened the Hamas and led to more violence – instead of stone throwing, more and more knives were used. Also, according to

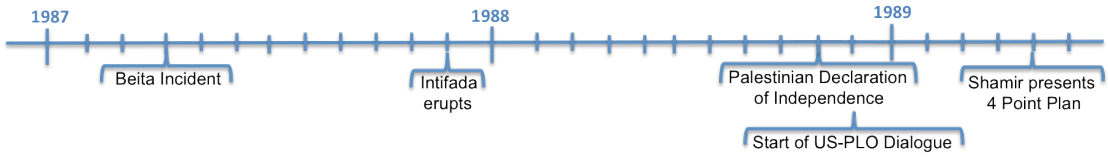


Israeli group members, the Intifada failed to crystallize that its aim contained two layers: the outward riots and the internal endeavor to establish a political administration as well as a social and economic infrastructure. The second layer had never been sufficiently communicated to the Israeli public. Finally, the Intifada was seen as having achieved the 1988 Declaration but as having failed to put it into practice one year later by not accepting the Israeli concession made to them at that time.

The Palestinian team responded to the Israeli analysis that the shift from throwing stones to using knives was not intended but a result of spontaneous individual acts. The horrors of occupation, like living under curfew for three weeks in a row, brought about the knifing, not PLO or Hamas orders. Palestinian participants made it clear that they never wanted their struggle to become militarized and that the PLO was battling against the Hamas in order to prevent Palestine from becoming a religious state.

Both parties engaged in a discussion of their mutual fear of violence and raised attention to the need for both of them to acknowledge their share of responsibility for it. They both admitted that their leaderships were not able to control street violence as much as they wanted them to. Further, both parties were able to talk about their anger towards the other caused by the violence and the misunderstandings. Israeli participants pointed out that they did not conceive the Intifada as a terror act, as it had been falsely portrayed to the Israeli public, but as a popular uprising.

The Palestinian participants then said that despite their anger they felt that there was a relationship between Israelis and Palestinians. They pointed



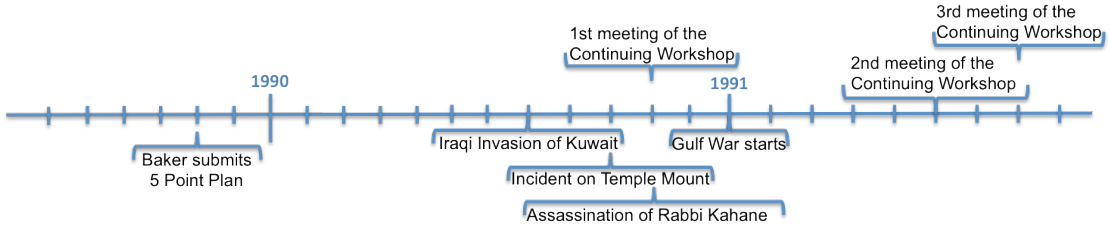
out that, also other Arab countries were on the look out to build such a relationship with Israel due to their economic and social problems.

Both sides agreed that they had a shared interest of achieving security and that they should engage in finding practical ways to contain violence and find a functional structure for peace. These objectives should be the starting point for negotiations.

In the final session both parties agreed to allow for citing the content of their conversations without attributing anything that had been said to a person. Together with the third party they discussed the organization of interim activities for the time until the next meeting and talked about ways of including the Palestinian group members that were not able to be present at the current meeting.

Reflections

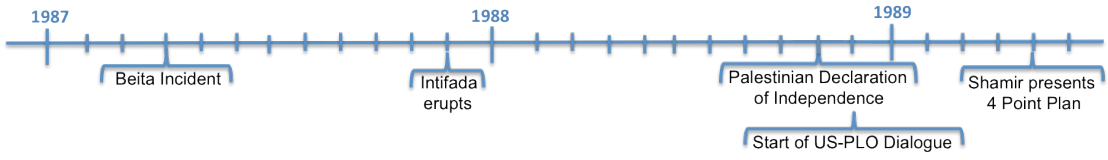
During the evaluation of how the Intifada impacted on the conflict situation, an instrumental element of identity negotiation surfaced when Palestinian participants said that the Intifada failed to make Israelis feel responsible for the occupation. Some of the Israeli participants showed difficulty with accepting that statement, a reaction that caused anger among the Palestinian group members. The difficulty of accepting responsibility and taking blame for one's own actions represents a challenge to the clear-cut perception of viewing the inside group as entirely good and of projecting everything that is negative on the outside group. Altering that perception implies opening up learning channels for integrating negative aspects into the self-perception and thereby altering an identity aspect. At this instance, the



discussion only scratched the surface of the issue, a more profound negotiation of that identity aspect occurred at a later stage of the Continuing Workshop.

Another interesting aspect of the discussion about the scope of the Intifada was that both parties analyzed the Intifada in terms of their success and failure. This is quite astonishing on the part of the Israelis, as the Intifada – being an uprising against Israeli occupation – had been directed against them. Nevertheless they were able to discern elements of the Intifada that led to an improvement of the Palestinian situation. The workshop setting had enabled a change of perception allowing Israeli participants to see that an improvement of the Palestinian situation was in their own interest and part of the way to approach a peaceful solution of the conflict.

Also, the first meeting of the Continuing Workshop revealed a number of shared concerns like the fear that the conflict would take on a religious component and the worry about the endangered security of the two parties' communities through violent outbreaks. Participants realized that both sides had a common interest in achieving security for their respective constituencies, which they could only meet in a joint effort of developing practical measures to contain violence. Both parties understood that such measures could only be established and implemented through official negotiations, and recognized that readiness to engage in official negotiations would necessitate sufficient mutual reassurance. Formulating statements and actions that would generate such reassurance through joint thinking processes within the framework of the workshop were found to be an agenda priority.

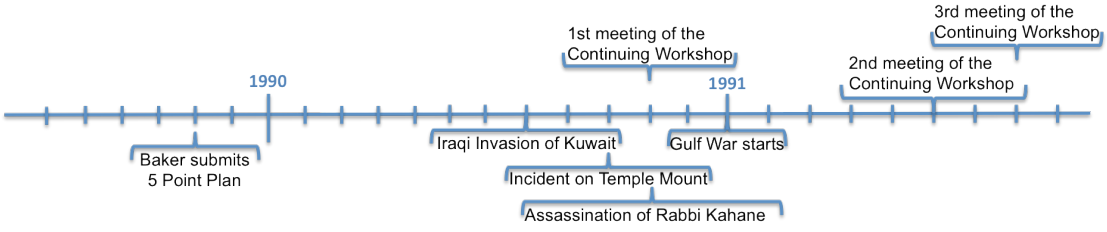


Second Meeting of the Continuing Workshop in June 1991

When the continuing group convened for the second time, in June 1991, all six Palestinian representatives were present, while the Israeli team counted only five members. One of the Israeli participants wanted to be replaced. The participant felt that a person closer to the political right would provide a better representation of the Israeli political spectrum. The third party told the participants that they had been talking with several potential candidates but none of them had been able to participate in the present meeting, either due to time constraints or political restrictions.

The third party had again reserved the first meeting-day for separate pre-workshop sessions with Palestinians and Israelis respectively, to assess their current situations. The third party opened each meeting by presenting a review of what had been discussed during the November meeting of the Continuing Workshop, which contained the following four points:

1) The reconstruction of a negotiating partner after a period of very serious deterioration, disappointment and skepticism. The third party pointed out that the November meeting had been one of the first major encounters between the two sides after Iraq had invaded Kuwait. The fact that workshop participants representing their respective communities were able to interact with each other in the framework of interactive problem solving showed them that there was still someone to talk to as a potential negotiating partner on each side.
2) The importance of being aware of the weight of Palestinian and Israeli public opinion. It was important for Israelis to realize that

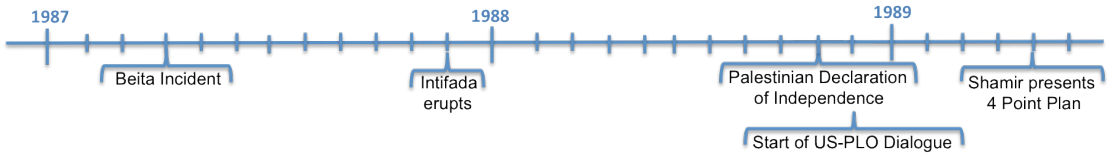


Palestinian public opinion does indeed exist. Each party had to accept that public opinion was a factor that needed to be taken seriously, as it imposes constraints and has a decisive impact on interactions occurring within each community as well as on interactions occurring between the two sides. The workshop discussions showed that actions of the leadership on both sides would remain confined by the support or lack thereof from their own but also from the opponent public. Both sides realized that it was vital to think about how public opinion could be addressed in reciprocal ways.

3) The theme of possible negotiation outcomes had been widely discussed. Palestinians made it clear that they would only engage in negotiations if they could be certain of its outcome, while Israelis wanted open-ended negotiations. The third party said that in their view neither side wanted to enter negotiations if the issue left open was their national existence.
4) Increased violence and the sense of loss of personal safety and its impacts on the two communities had been discussed.

Pre-workshop Session with the Palestinian Group

The reaction of the Palestinian participants to this review was affirmative. They confirmed that the group underwent a considerable movement that started from being locked in a psychological blockage caused by events that followed the Gulf Crisis, went through the process of telling each other the things that weighed on the group members' chests, and arrived at



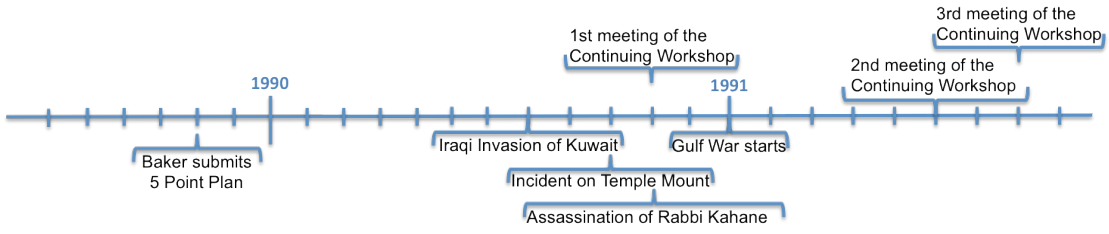
a point where each of the participants felt better and able to tackle a whole range of issues in a constructive discussion. They also said that they felt greatly supported by the third party throughout this process and that no one shied away from facing the tensions of such a difficult dialogue.

With regard to the current political situation, the Palestinian participants said that they saw the position of the two participating groups as being asymmetrical. They explained that the Israeli participants represented the opposition who was losing influence in the Israeli political arena, while Palestinian participants represented the mainstream of their community. They wanted to make that point clear at the beginning of the meeting and make sure it would be taken into consideration along the discussions. They further wanted to put the following two points on the agenda: to develop mechanisms that would rebuild mutual understanding on an ongoing basis and to discuss measures to settle Palestinian fears about recent developments in the Occupied Territories.

The third party asked them to explain what they meant by mutual understanding.

They answered that in their view the *Gulf War*[H12] had caused serious misunderstandings between the two parties and cracked their dialogue. Further, they felt that developing measures to rebuild mutual understanding was an issue that could be fruitfully discussed with representatives of the Israeli

[H12] *The Gulf Crisis had developed into a war on January 17th, 1991 when hostilities of the Operation Desert Storm began. A coalition of 34 countries under US lead had deployed troops in Saudi Arabia. They started to use force after diplomatic efforts had*



opposition. They saw this to be necessary, as they felt that although the two groups understood each other on an intellectual level, Israeli participants did not fully grasp Palestinian psychology and what was behind their political thinking.

The third party also enquired about the second agenda point, Palestinian fears and what these entailed in detail.

Palestinian participants answered that one of their fears was that Palestinian significance had declined on the international stage. The reason for this was the content and posture of the American Peace Initiative. Palestinians felt that American statements started to portray the conflict as being first and foremost an Arab-Israeli conflict again and no longer an Israeli-Palestinian one. Only six months earlier, Baker was using opposite terms, trying to establish an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue.

They also mentioned the breakdown of the US-PLO dialogue again. They felt that the US did not only close that dialogue but broke off relations with Palestinians as a people. They showed themselves to be deeply disappointed about that and lacked understanding for it.

The third party asked them to think about what they would want to ask the Israelis.

Palestinian participants answered that they would like to tell the Israeli group members that they found the position of the Israeli political opposition to be ineffective. They wanted to ask them whether they had ideas for changing that situation.

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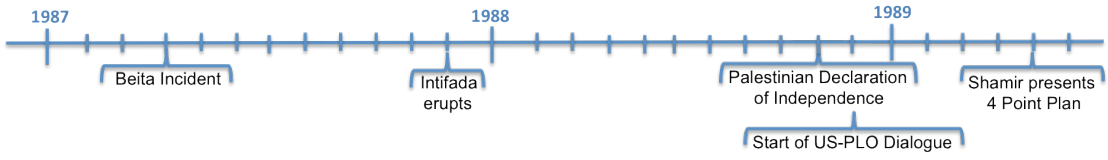
failed to bring Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. The war ended on 1 March 1991with the liberation of Kuwait (Tessler, 1994).

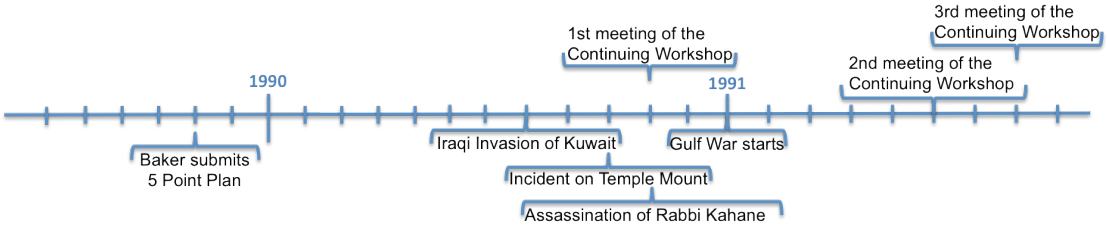


Pre-workshop Session with the Israeli Group

The Israeli participants proposed to add a further discussion point to the presented review. They deemed it necessary to deliberate what impact the Gulf War and other recent events have had on each community with regard to the issue of mutual reassurance.

The third party agreed to that. They suggested taking one of the issues that were discussed during the last meeting as a starting point for elaborating how to achieve mutual reassurance. They recalled the following three topics as relevant discussion starters:

1) how to address fears and concerns that were detectable in the public opinion on each side, as well as to think about what would stimulate a fruitful interaction between the two publics;
2) how to formulate actions that would engender mutual reassurance in terms of creating readiness within both body politics to engage in negotiations. The third party recalled that the prevalent issue with regard to that topic was the problem of an ambiguous endpoint of negotiations. Israelis found open-ended discussions to be fruitful and offering room for creative solutions; while Palestinians wanted to know that a Palestinian state was a probable outcome of negotiations before being able to commit to them. Therefore, the third party proposed to set up negotiation parameters that would be sufficiently open for Israelis and adequately reassuring for Palestinians;
3) how to build reassurance in the face of increased violence and vulnerability of personal safety on both sides.



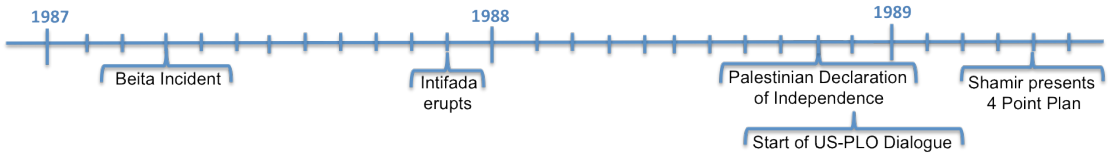
In reaction to this outline, an Israeli participant mentioned having seen changes in Palestinian politics during the weeks preceding the workshop, which pointed to an increased readiness on their part to accept open-ended negotiations. Other participants agreed on that point and said that a more central discussion topic would be to assess: what kind of impact the American peace initiative had on the Palestinian situation and how each side reacted to it.

The third party included that point in the discussion agenda. They further reminded the participants to focus on overcoming the obstacles towards negotiations that existed in the two body politics. They found the groups to be very well qualified to propel the erosion of obstacles that prevented each political leadership from accepting Baker's proposal.

Some Israeli team members pointed out that their current government would not be receptive to a report from the workshop containing suggestions for the improvement of the situation. They held that what would indeed be possible for the group members to do was to acquire knowledge about attitudes and desires of the other side. They felt that it would be useful for the Israeli group to learn what local Palestinians as well as those living in the Diaspora thought about the nature of their linkage to Jordan, how they viewed the future of Jerusalem and Israeli security issues.

Joint Workshop Sessions

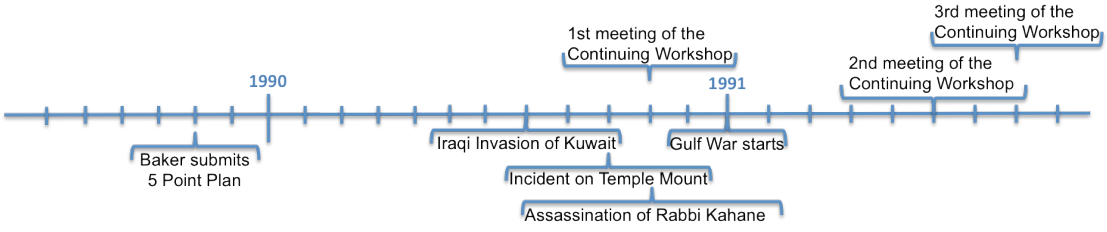
During the first two workshop sessions the participants told each other in a rather agitated atmosphere how they had experienced the difficult conditions that ensued from the Gulf War. Discussions centered on the Palestinian position towards Iraq. Israeli participants explained that the large Israeli public



interpreted Palestinian behavior during the Gulf War as being a threat to Israel because it still looked as if they were siding with Iraq.

In a next step the two sides engaged in assessing important changes that had occurred in both communities since their last meeting. Israeli participants found the following four changes to be far-reaching:

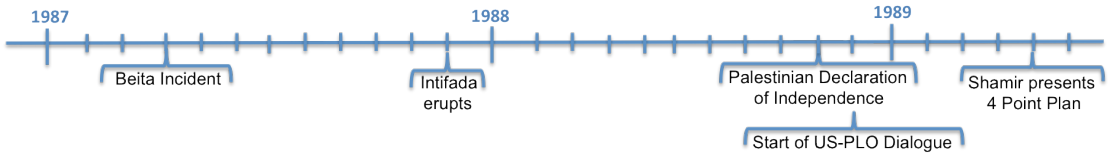
1) Israelis became ready for seeking a solution to the conflict. However, after the Gulf War they conceived the conflict as involving more the Arab world than the Palestinians. After the Gulf War Israelis no longer felt existentially threatened by the Palestinian Intifada but by the conflict with the Arab world. This general Israeli perception was in line with the Likud policy and undermined the position of the Left.
2) Israeli participants said they recognized considerable changes in Palestinian thinking. They saw them putting forth a much more moderate position and demonstrating readiness to accept interim solutions. This new attitude was, however, not reflected in the Israeli media and hence not absorbed by the Israeli public.
3) The Gulf War had strengthened the Shamir government. The perception of Arafat leading Palestinians to support Iraq created a situation in which the Israeli public would never support negotiations with Arafat, although they might be ready to talk to the Palestinian people.
4) The Gulf war led to a complete indifference and paralysis in the Israeli public with regard to any conflict issue. Keeping the status quo became their only focus. Israeli efforts should therefore



concentrate on creating an atmosphere that would make people realize that something needed to be done.

In reaction to these statements, some Palestinian participants showed disappointment, first about the workshop format, which they expected to be a bit more structured preventing a situation in which too many different issues were discussed at once. Secondly, Palestinian group members were disappointed that topics were raised again, which had already been clarified during the previous meeting. Having said that, they engaged in identifying five areas, in which major changes had occurred during the past months:

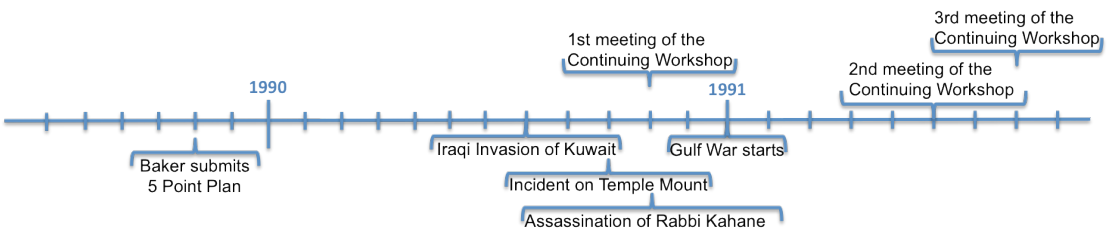
1) The Gulf War had been the biggest vehicle of change. They stressed once again that Palestinians did not side with Iraq because they approved of their invasion of Kuwait but because they were against the strategy of the West and Israel. Also, Palestinians tried very hard to clarify their political position by making statements about their opposition to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and about their rejection of a military solution, but their true stand had never been adequately communicated to the Israeli public.
2) As a result, the Israeli peace camp also became subject to change as it had fallen into the same trap of being deceived by the image that the Israeli government portrayed of the Palestinians. The peace camp's activities even added negatively to the distortion of the Palestinian perception.
3) A third area where change occurred concerned the Occupied Territories. The Israeli military authorities present in the Territories exploited the atmosphere that ensued from the Gulf War to move to a



new policy of hardship. As a consequence the living conditions had become extremely difficult. For example, the Israeli military had divided the territories into four different regions interrupting both private and economic life and limiting market options to one little region. Also they imposed frequent curfews. An agricultural study conducted in Jericho showed that with each curfew prices dropped by half.

4) Further, there had been an increase in settlement building and land confiscation stemming from heightened Soviet and Ethiopian immigration.

5) Finally, the Palestinian political process underwent considerable change. From a Palestinian point of view Americans and Israelis became engaged in launching a peace process that built on the results of the Gulf War. The shift in balance of power in the region seemed to enable them to push for a conflict settlement that was more advantageous for Israel and less satisfactory for Palestinians. So far, all of Israel's preconditions for engaging into negotiations had been heard by the US while Palestinian issues had been postponed until the start of negotiations. Also, the US had been using the situation to pursue their own interests by asking Israel to stop building settlements and offering them in return to refrain from pushing for UN involvement in the process.



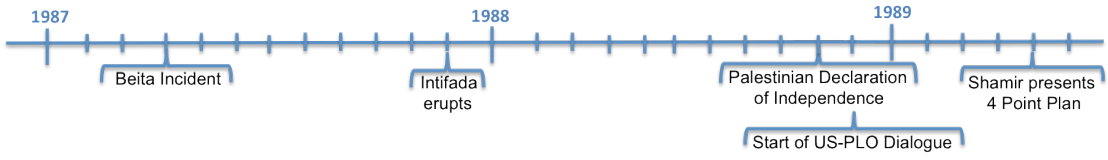
Israeli participants agreed on the point of a changed peace process and said that they did not approve of its current direction. They confirmed that an *Arabization* of the conflict had taken place.

Palestinian participants then drew attention to the fact, that Baker's idea of replacing the Palestinians with coalition members as partners for peace was an illusion. The rest of the Arab world would only agree to normalize their relations with Israel once they were ready to talk to Palestinians, which was a fact that even Baker needed to realize.

Israeli participants responded to the Palestinian worry about substantial immigration. They explained that the immigration issue was actually a chance for the Palestinians and the peace process, because Israel would need not only a lot of money to absorb the influx of immigrants, but also stability and peace. Shamir's argument that "big" immigration needed a "big" Israel would not work, as a bigger Israel would necessarily be unstable. Only a smaller Israel would be stable and thereby able to absorb more immigrants. The only hurdle they were facing was to convince the Israeli public of that fact.

* * *

In the next meeting Palestinian participants picked up on the issue concerning the Israeli opposition and explained finding it difficult to understand the program of the Left and what they were trying to develop in political terms. The statements, which had been made lately by the opposition, seemed to be directed at gaining approval from the right wing and the majority of the Israelis.



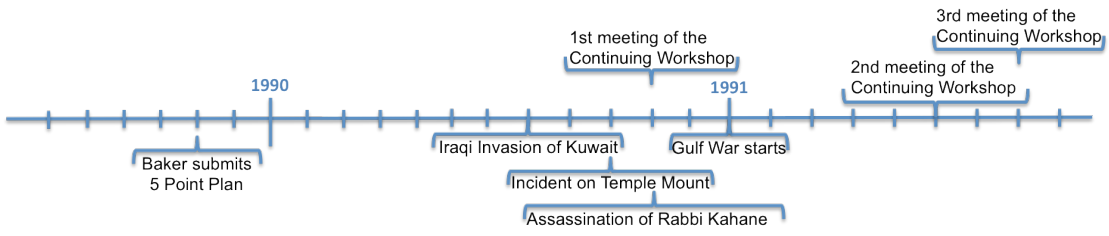
Israeli team members answered that the reason for this was the attempt to gain support from electorates. They explained that not all of the Israelis who theoretically were in favor of an agreement with Palestinians also voted for the Left. There was a floating vote of about 10%, which the opposition tried to win as Labor voters. The reason why they adopted a mainstream discourse to convince them was that they believed that only by speaking in a hawkish way, the vote of these 10% could be won. Further, they pointed out that the Left was shying away from revealing some of their intentions with regard to the peace process because they feared to lose ground with that 10% and to lose the 40 seats they had. This was the reason why they did not take clearer positions and adopted stands that were of instrumental nature.

In a next step the Israeli team pointed out the following issues as their discussion priorities:

- the constitutional linkage of the Occupied Territories and Jordan;
- the future modality of Jerusalem;
- whether Palestinians could relate to security guarantees that Israelis considered to be essential.

The third party then asked the Palestinian participants to identify three priority issues as well.

Some Palestinian participants had doubts whether the Palestinian group was able to represent the general Palestinian position or entitled to make any concessions on behalf of the Palestinian people. They thought the group should confine itself to defining what the Palestinian concerns were and identifying issues that seemed relevant to Palestinians.



Among their priority issues were the Israeli settlement policy in the Occupied Territories as well as identifying possible modalities – that would be acceptable to Israel – for connecting Gaza and the West Bank

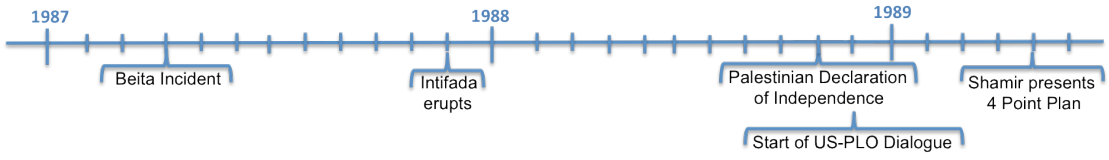
The group then became entangled in a controversy about the usefulness of their effort to formulate suggestions for concrete actions. Participants on both sides voiced concerns about the difficulties their communities would have with implementing suggestions, which would eventually be formulated by the continuing group.

In response to that the third party suggested that the Palestinian group members should make a list with all their personal concerns instead of arguing those that they associated with their polity.

Palestinian participants distinguished the following three concerns:

- lack of specificity: without the ability to talk about specific political issues there would be no possibility to recognize whether or not the group could reach a satisfactory level of political agreement;
- Israeli activities in the Occupied Territories like land confiscation and economic deterioration;
- how Israeli public opinion could be influenced: the Palestinian participants suggested that the workshop group should jointly formulate statements and jointly present them to an Israeli audience.

The third party then pointed out that there was not a real difference in nature between the concerns that each side had identified. They therefore suggested leaving any kind of complicated distinction that might lead to further confusion out of the way. They asked each party to choose two issues during their joint dinner for next day's discussions.



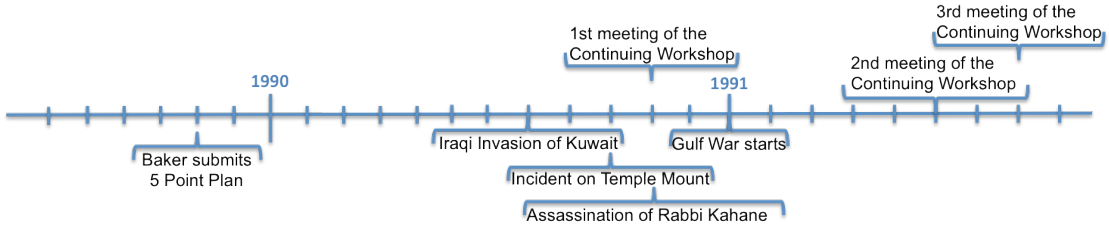
The group agreed to that.

Reflections

The difficult process of singling out discussion topics, that both parties found relevant and sensible with regard to producing a usable end product, mirrored the difficulty of the situation that both parties faced. Each showed considerable insecurity about where to place itself within the conflict spectrum. Especially the Palestinian position and their self-perception had been shaken. This became apparent when the Palestinian participants were reluctant to echo the Israeli account about the background of the Labor policy and said to be unable to state the official Palestinian position.

The third-party intervention that suggested formulating personal concerns instead of concentrating on official positions for the purpose of identifying viable discussion topics soothed the atmosphere and brought the talks back to an analytical level.

The third party opened the first session on the second day of the meeting by introducing the four topics the group members had chosen to discuss. The Palestinian participants named "the right to self-determination" and "how to change the de facto situation in the Occupied Territories" as their most prevalent issues, while the Israeli participants wanted to discuss "the right of return" and "the Palestinian relationship to Jordan". The aim for the second day was to spend one session on each topic and thereby cover all of them in one day. The group decided to first talk about the right to self-determination.



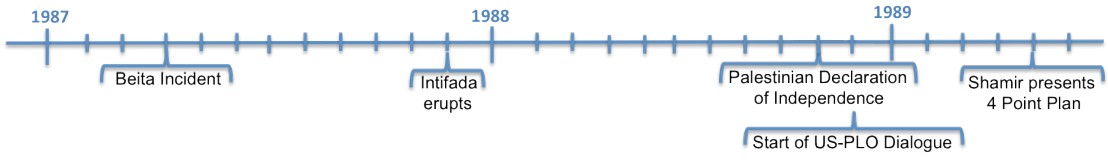
For the purpose of making such a far-reaching topic more approachable in a joint discussion, the third party phrased it in the following question: "As we try to promote a peace process, how do we reassure Palestinians that they will have a Palestinian State at the end of negotiations considering the Israeli reluctance to give any guarantee at the beginning of the process?" The third party explained that tackling this issue in a problem-solving mode consisted of finding out why Palestinians were eager for assurance and why Israelis were reluctant to commit themselves to a pre-negotiation. Once the motivations of these objectives were uncovered the group would be able to explore ways that would be responsive to both parties' requirements.

Israeli participants first asked the Palestinian group members to explain what they understood by "self-determination" in a concrete way.

They answered that first of all, the fate of the Palestinian people of being stateless needed to be seen as having started in 1948. They explained that what they wanted to achieve through the right of self-determination was to build a sovereign state. For the Palestinian participants it was conceivable that a future Palestinian state would form a federation with Jordan or Israel. Further, the Palestinian state was intended to comprise only part of their original homeland, and thereby accept a compromise with Israel.

Israeli participants asked several questions about the status of Palestinians living in other countries and to which government they would respond to after the establishment of a Palestinian state.

They answered that each Palestinian would be free to choose where he or she wanted to live and that they would be responsible to the respective government of their country of residence. That would mean for Palestinians,



who would choose to remain Israeli citizens, to respond to the Israeli government.

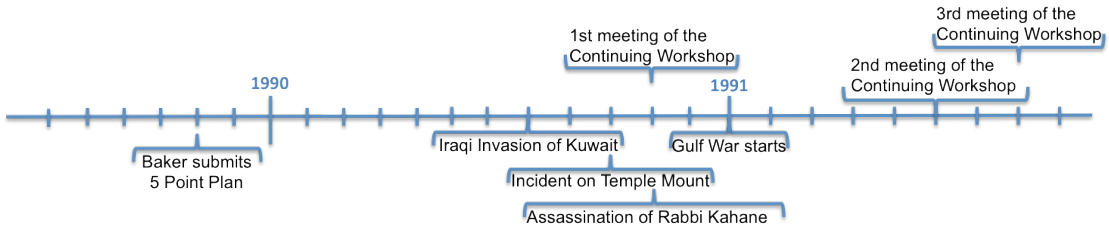
According to an Israeli participant Palestinian self-determination entailed at least the following three questions:

- whether Palestinians would have political rights;
- how Palestinians would fulfill their right to self-determination;
- and whether Palestinians living in Israel would have the right to secede.

Some Palestinian participants viewed the first principle of self-determination consisted of unity of the Palestinian people anywhere and to provide statehood to that people. What needed to be worked out was the implementation of that objective and what the status of Palestinians living in Israel would be. In their view, the issue touched on the question of what could be repaired from the injustice the Palestinians became subject to in 1948 without contradicting a two state solution with Israel.

Other Palestinian participants added that the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people needed to be recognized even before it would become possible to implement or exercise that right. The Palestinian participants explained that recognition of that right was key to Israeli security, as the major reason for instability was the feeling of the Palestinian people that they were denied the right to self-determination. In a next step the right to self-determination should be implemented by establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.

Israeli participants asked why a future Palestinian state would include these two areas and not Jaffa and Nazareth.

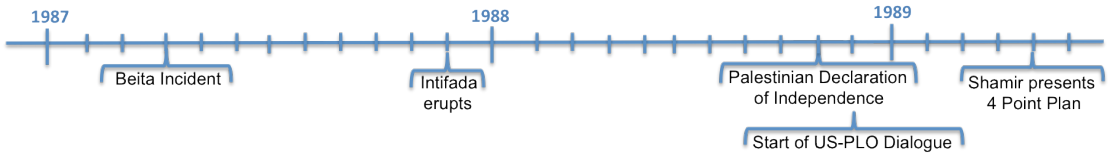


The Palestinian participants answered that this was what the Palestinian National Council had voted for.

Some Israeli participants said that they were not able to fully grasp the concept of a Palestinian nationhood, as there had been no Palestinian nation prior to 1948 but an area administered by the British Mandate. Israeli group members admitted that hearing them speak of Palestinian nationhood and implementing the right to self-determination felt very frightening to them and entailed a threat to Israel.

Palestinian group members said to be very upset about the Israeli statement that revealed a lack of understanding of the fact that Palestinians conceived themselves as a nation. They explained that the right to self-determination was the only way for Palestinians to express their nationhood. For Palestinians this was not a question of borders but a question of existence as a people. The Palestinian participants stated that it was a Zionist objective to keep others in the unknown about who lived in Palestine before the Jewish state was established. This was the reason why those creating the state of Israel thought they could be oblivious of the Palestinians who had been living in the area. It was indispensable for Palestinians and for the continuation of any kind of negotiations that Israelis recognized that.

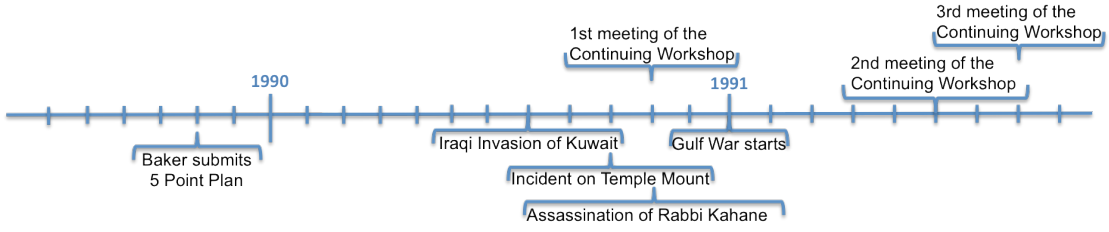
Palestinian participants illustrated further that as much as the Israeli fears were understandable, it was vital for the Israelis to understand that the most basic demand from Palestinians was Israeli recognition of Palestinian nationhood. Once Israelis recognized Palestinian nationhood, Palestinians would become able to talk about how to put their right of self-determination into practice without jeopardizing the nationhood of the Jewish people.



Israeli participants replied, that the Palestinian participants seemed to expect more from the Israeli than from the Palestinian side. The Israeli group members felt that the Palestinian participants asked the Israelis not only to accept Palestinian rights but also their historical ideology, while Israelis did not ask Palestinians to accept Zionism. Israeli group members demanded to leave ideology out of the picture.

A Palestinian participant replied that the discourse was not about ideology but about identity and explained that creating their own state was immensely important for Palestinians with regard to their identity. Palestinians did not know what to answer if people asked them where they were from. For a Palestinian any kind of traveling entailed issues of identity as they do not to know what to declare as nationality when passing a passport control. Many Palestinians' "laissez-passer" may state Jordanian while in their hearts they feel Palestinian. A Palestinian group member told the group about the trip to the present meeting and the experience of having said to the immigration official to be of Palestinian nationality, following which the immigration official wrote down as country of citizenship "Palestine". The participant said having felt very happy because it looked as if it had been possible to create a fact.

Other Palestinian group members explained that Palestinians had to accept that Jews living all over the world all see themselves as one nation. Palestinians only expected Israelis to grant them the same. They also stated that the existence of Israel was built on the denial of the Palestinians' existence and that Palestinians therefore demanded from the Israelis to recognize in an official statement of principles the fact that they displaced the Palestinians when they created the Israeli state.

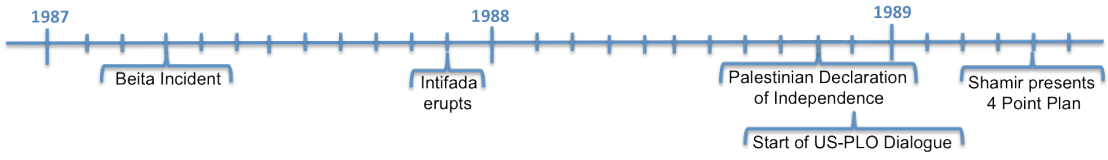


Some Israeli group members acknowledged the Palestinian demand and affirmed that mutual recognition was needed. They explained that self-determination was always tied to recognition and that it was therefore completely legitimate for Palestinians to ask for that recognition prior to engaging in a peace process. They further illustrated that each side was asking the other for recognition of their existence as a nation. In terms of historical developments of the Palestinian nationhood, it was not origination of a nation that defined its status. By referring to Anderson's term of "imagined communities"[1] they pointed out that it was a community's self-definition that determined their status of constituting a nation. It was therefore unquestionable that all Palestinians had the right to self-determination, including those with Israeli citizenship. The questions remaining were only about the implementation of that right. Implementation had to be undertaken in a way that would calm Israeli fears about their security now and in the future.

Other Israeli participants admitted to be frightened by the improbability that a Palestinian state, confined to the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, could have room for three to four million Palestinians. They felt that a future Palestinian state of that nature would be very likely to try to expand its territory to the West and absorb Israeli land.

Palestinian participants replied that this would be a problem that a Palestinian state would have to solve within its own borders and that they did not see how this would be different from the Jewish law of return.

Israeli participants replied that the probability for 12 million Jews to come to Israel was very low, if it were they would say the right of return would not be viable. They then reflected on the question whether it would be possible



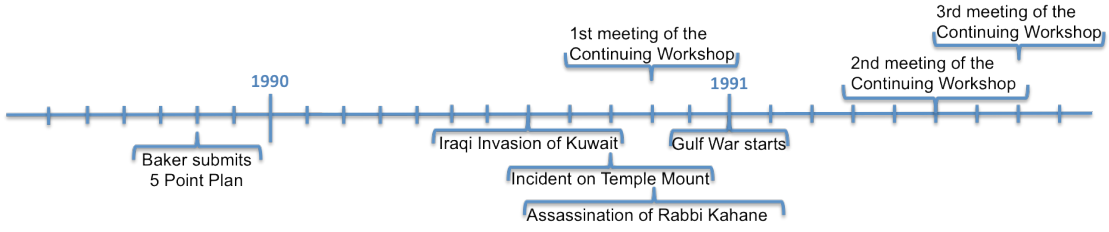
to limit the right of return to a certain number. In addition, they saw two other difficulties, one on the Arab-Palestinian level and the other one touched on the settlement problem. With regard to the Arab-Palestinian level, Israeli participants feared that an agreement leading to a Palestinian state would not be final and that the future Palestinian parliament would change its mind, as a Palestinian state within the proposed borders would not be viable. They felt more at ease with a scenario of a Palestinian federation with Jordan. With regard to the settlement problem, Israeli participants stated that a Palestinian state would mean to remove 112 settlements, including the reallocation of 100,000 Jewish settlers from East Jerusalem, which would be a political impossibility for the Israeli government.

The third party asked the Israeli participants what they conceived to be an assurance of the finality of future Palestinian state borders.

Israeli participants expressed having a hard time trusting the Palestinian Parliament and that it would be reasonable to hold a referendum on that subject. Palestinian participants said not to see a reason for not trusting their parliamentarians, and that they would immediately agree on a referendum if Israelis could only convince Shamir of holding one.

Reflections

There was a key moment in the discussion about the right to self-determination, when the Continuing Workshop addressed several negotiable identity aspects such as national narratives, the monolithic character of national identity, and territorial ownership issues.

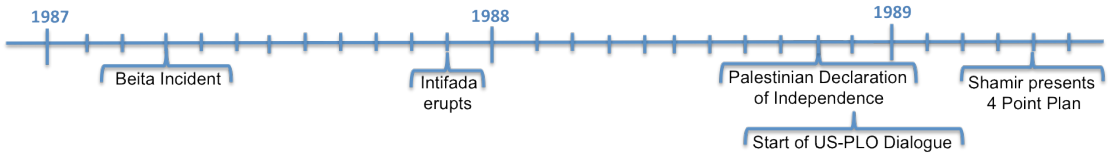


The discussion started with a quarrel about Palestinian nationhood, when Palestinian participants linked the recognition of their nation to the injustice they had suffered during the war in 1948. The Palestinians implicitly asked the Israelis to acknowledge responsibility for what they did to the Palestinians during the war. The quarrel peaked when Israeli participants said that there was no Palestinian nation prior to 1948.

The subsequent statement of a Palestinian participant that it was a Zionist objective to make Israelis believe that there was no Palestinian nation living in the area under British Mandate before the creation of Israel, triggered a shift in the atmosphere of the discussion. This shift was supported by the Palestinian statement that they understood Israeli fears of the consequences that acceptance of Palestinian nationhood could entail for them.

The astounding explanation of Palestinian group members, that Israelis had been taught a false truth, demonstrated an openness towards information about the other side that generated understanding for the reasons of their believe system and thereby engendered a real negotiation of identity aspects.

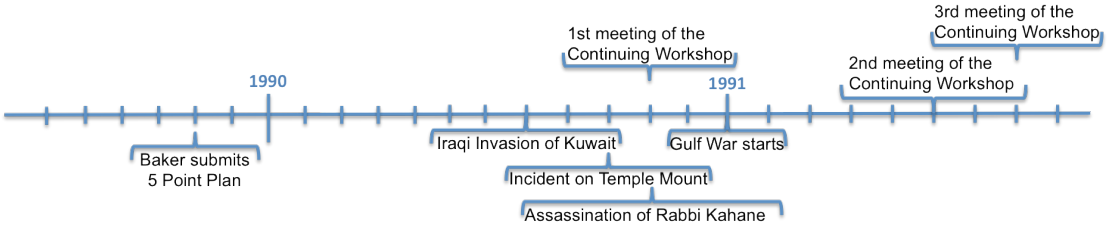
The negotiation process was challenged, when Israeli team members were reluctant to accept the Palestinian statement and reduced the subject to an ideological plea. A Palestinian participant's insightful demonstration that the subject was not ideology but identity, by referring to the fact that Palestinians did not even have official papers that would document who they were in terms of national belonging, met that challenge well. The negotiation process was also furthered by the Palestinian affirmation that Palestinians accepted how Jewish people all over the world felt as one nation and that they only asked for the same acceptance on their behalf.



Remarkably, the Palestinian explanation of their need for national identity and what it entailed was supported by the intervention of Israeli participants who illustrated that a nation existed if it perceived and defined itself as such. The Israeli participants' affirmation that the group's discussion revealed that *both* parties were actually asking for recognition of their national existence acted as an enormous boost to the negotiation process and represented a real turning point in the discussions. Following this exchange, the group was able to tackle concrete issues of how Palestinian self-determination could be approached in a way that would account for Israeli fear of losing territorial ownership and their very existence as a nation. The dialogue about self-determination paved the way to talk about the right of return, one of the most pivotal topics in the Israeli-Palestinian discourse.

The remaining discussion sessions of the second meeting centered on closing the gaps between Israeli security concerns and the Palestinian need for an acknowledged acceptance of their existence as a people with a right to self-determination. The group managed to partly close that gap by identifying Israeli concerns that prevented them from accepting the Palestinian request and by identifying the following three ways to meet these concerns:

1) through explicit commitment from the Palestinians to the finality of the borders and arrangements of their future state;
2) through a Palestinian commitment to build a confederation or another arrangement with Jordan
3) through a Palestinian commitment to implement security arrangements concerning demilitarization, refugees, etc.

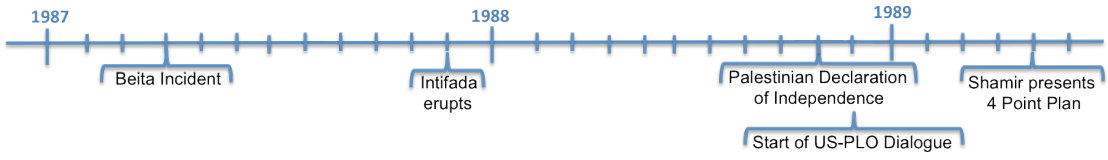


The third party explained that these commitments needed to be clearly communicated in two ways, by making the readiness of Palestinian leaders to engage in negotiations under these conditions known to the Israeli polity, and by working out details of arrangements that could be considered in official negotiations.

What needed to be worked on in a next step was to find ways of making this progress known to the two publics. The third party suggested picking up on the statement made by Israeli participants about the importance of communicating the existing Palestinian position to the Israeli public and that this would be something the Palestinians would not have to do alone but in a joint effort with the Israelis, who could explain how the Israeli public opinion can best be reached. Further, Israelis could make efforts to embed the communicated Palestinian statements in the Israeli public opinion in a firm way that would not be as easily reversible as the progress made in 1988.

With regard to strategies for implementing that goal, Israeli participants suggested that many different groups should become involved in the manner of grass root activities because the workshop group did not have the capacity to respond to all tasks at hand. They also considered a summary statement, authorized by members of the PLO and the West Bank leaders, to be helpful. Further, Israeli participants deemed it as very productive to publish an interview with a high level PLO representative to show the Palestinian position clearly in the Israeli press.

The group then engaged in a discussion about Palestinian elections as another means of expressing the changed Palestinian political stand. Israeli participants suggested their Palestinian counterparts to press for elections of a

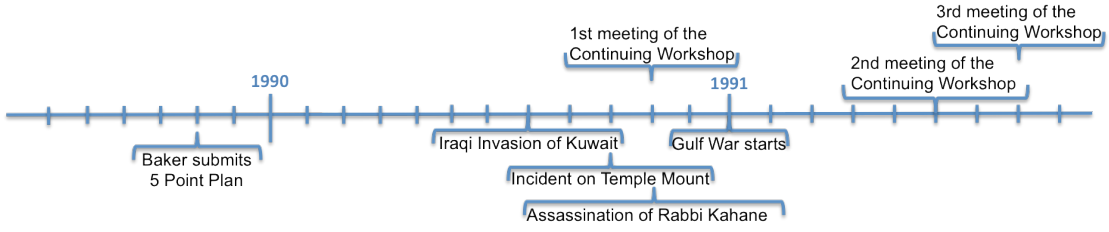


local self-government like the *Shamir Plan*[H15] had suggested. Palestinian participants explained how absurd and dangerous it was to hold elections for an autonomous government of a people living under military occupation, a situation in which those elected by their own people risked to be arrested by the occupier. Israeli participants suggested holding elections anyway disregarding acceptance from Israel as they found the act of proof for the Palestinian capacity to elect a democratically representative political body to outweigh the obstacles that were to be expected from the Shamir government. According to Israeli participants, Palestinian elections were to serve three purposes:

1) to have representatives able to engage in negotiations with Israel
2) to negotiate self-government in the Occupied Territories
3) to handle an administration in the Occupied Territories

A Palestinian participant suggested adding a fourth point stating that elections for the appointment of a representative to the Palestinian National Council. Another Palestinian participant vehemently objected to the Israeli outline, according to which elections would only bring them the possibility of reaching an autonomy status of the Occupied Territories. The participant explained that Palestinians did not fight for 40 years to attain merely civilian rights for their occupied people and that they wanted more than just an autonomy status. The participant added, that if elections would only be seen as

[H15] *Israel's Four Point Plan formulated in May 1989 by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin contained the following four basic points: -strengthening the peace with Egypt as a regional cornerstone, -promoting full peaceful relations with the Arab states, -improving refugee conditions through international efforts, -Palestinian elections and interim self-rule for a five year period leading to a "permanent solution" (Lukacs, 1992: 236-237).*

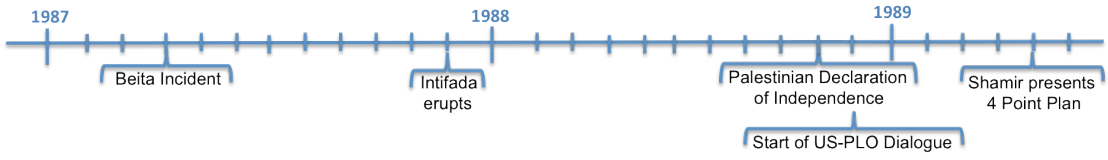


serving the purpose of granting autonomy to the Occupied Territories, Palestinians should not agree to them.

The third party reminded the Israeli participants that if they wanted to persuade their Palestinian colleagues that elections were worthwhile, they needed to convince them, that autonomy was not all that was to be attained through elections but that an autonomy status would only be an interim step.

The third party then proposed to set plans for the next meeting that was scheduled to take place later during the year in August. The third party said that they planned to alter the workshop format a little bit and also hold meetings with subgroups to outline some ideas as it had been suggested by some of the participants during the present meeting. The third party recommended that the participants should prepare some draft papers reflecting the ideas that had been achieved so far, either individually or in small groups, they also reflected on the possibility that one member of each team could get together with a third party member at some point before the next meeting for that purpose. Further, they proposed four agenda items that could be addressed at their next meeting if the group was able to agree to them. The agenda items were intended to build on the discussions of the current meeting. They included:

1) how to create a political environment that would allow closing the gap between the two sides and thereby enable them to engage in negotiations;
2) discussing the relationship between Jordan, the Palestinian Nation, and Israel in terms of their future constitutional and economic arrangements;



3) developing joint ideas for the purpose of communicating them to each body politic in the form of jointly developed articles that would be published within each community;
4) discussing a unilateral Palestinian initiative for holding elections.

The group agreed to those propositions and the meeting ended on friendly terms.

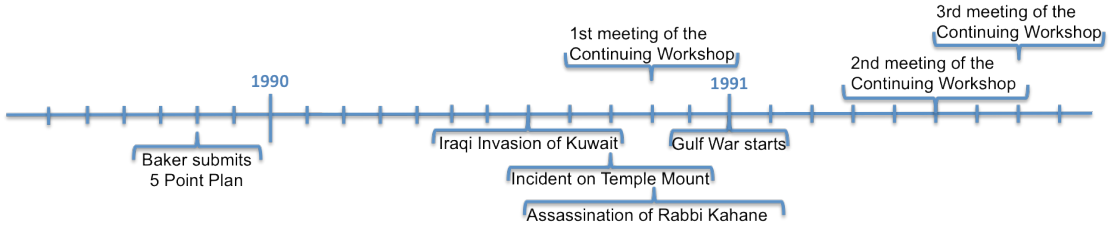
Third Meeting of the Continuing Workshop in August 1991

The third meeting of the Continuing Workshop started directly with a joint discussion session. The third party opened the session by suggesting the following three issues as agenda items for the first day: recent developments; items of the Baker Plan that were relevant for the work of the Continuing Workshop; and identifying pertinent discussion topics for the current meeting.

The third party then asked both parties about the reactions to the process that the Baker Plan had set in motion.

Israeli participants referred to the *memorandum of understanding*[H16] that the Israeli Prime Minister had requested as a precondition for agreeing to a

[H16] *The Israeli government expected the US to negotiate with Arab representatives that the Palestinian delegation would form part of the Jordanian delegation, that it would not include PLO representatives, nor people living in East Jerusalem or outside the occupied territories and bring them to commit to these conditions in* ***a memorandum of understanding*** *that Israel and the Palestinian delegation would sign. The US on their part did not speak of a memorandum but of letters of assurance that would be sent to all parties eventually agreeing to attend the peace conference (including Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Israel) in order to broker outstanding reservations about their participation. Israeli officials just interpreted the US offer as leading to a memorandum of understanding that would carry more weight (Cowell, 1991).*

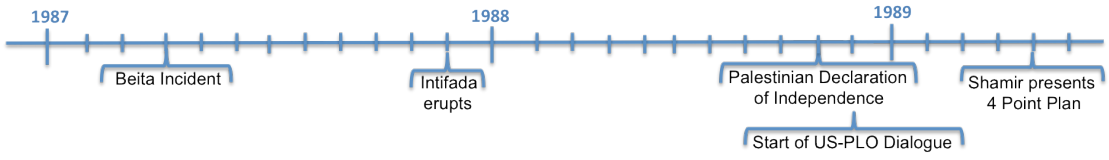


possible peace conference. The Israeli group members argued that the reasons why an official peace conference became feasible were one, because the Palestinian community was weakened and two, because the Israeli public was alarmed by the scope of recent violent outbreaks exerting pressure on the Shamir government to alleviate the situation.

The Israeli group clarified, that while the format of a future peace process was almost agreed upon, its substance was not. In the Israeli participants' view, the US tried to draw two memos of understanding, one with Israel and one with the Palestinians; a procedure that would most likely cause contradictions. The memo of understanding reflected how wide the gap between the two parties was. Unless it were possible for them to bridge that gap, it would be difficult to discuss a possible agreement on the West Bank and Gaza in a potential peace conference.

In addition, Israeli participants raised another issue that had probably impacted on the current Israeli policy, namely that since June 1991 there had been a growing controversy on the national budget and about how to proceed on expenditure for immigration. The controversy was heightened by the fact that Israel had just suffered from an inflation of 3%, which frightened members of the Knesset and the public alike. Even the Minister of Finance, who was a hawk, had been heard saying that the economic situation might make him want to change his political view.

Then, Israeli participants picked up on two major difficulties, which the peace process was facing: Palestinian self-determination bearing as a consequence the establishment of a Palestinian state and the development of a new modality for the city of Jerusalem. The difficulties with regard to these



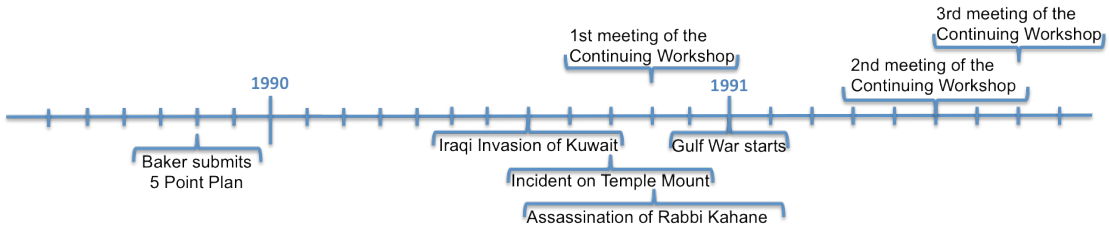
issues started, according to the Israeli participants, with the election procedure for putting together a Palestinian delegation for the negotiations. It was neither clear who the eligible Palestinian representatives would be (some candidates had been ruled out by the Israeli government), nor what segment of the Palestinian people would vote for them. The Israeli group members were of the view that these two issues were irresolvable at that moment and suggested to find other procedural structures for negotiations that would not touch on emotionally sensitive issues.

Palestinian participants objected that these issues were unavoidable and pointed out that Palestinians had already made concessions with regard to the first issue by agreeing to form a delegation with Jordan.

Other Palestinian participants summarized the events of the last three months and explained why it had been a difficult time for their community:

1) the Palestinian polity had been struggling with a peace process that demanded essential decisions and assurances from their part;
2) they had been facing serious political differences amongst themselves;
3) and they had to juggle heightened financial problems, which resulted from the problem that no US funds were available at a time when the Israeli government had finally given green light for investments in US currency in the West Bank.

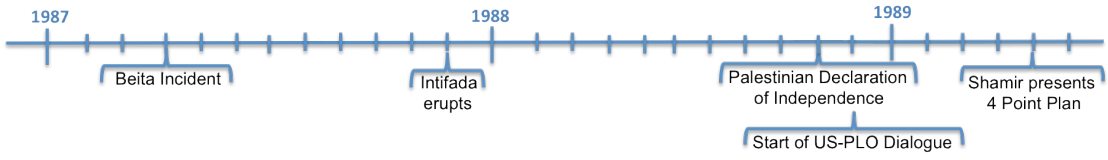
Israeli participants then asked for further elaboration on the second point.



Palestinian participants explained that the Palestinian community could not be sure about the content of meetings that Baker had been holding with various parties. They felt they were neither adequately informed nor did they have the possibility to attribute their share to the meetings. The lack of information and participation made them suspicious and led to a three way split of opinions. The leadership of the PLO adopted a positive outlook towards recent developments and viewed the American initiative as an opportunity to improve the Palestinian situation. A second strand of thought saw potential in the US initiative and wanted to cooperate. They did not fully agree with how the US had been proceeding so far, though, and deemed it necessary to involve Arab states. People taking that view, suspected that Baker avoided the discussion of significant topics with the Palestinians because he wanted to keep the door open for working out an agenda with Arab states, and then come back to the Palestinians with a set plan. A third opinion group took the view that talks should be boycotted altogether because it was just another American imperialist policy designed to uphold the status quo.

The third party, then, asked the Israeli participants about their view of the current events.

Israeli participants answered that they as well had little information about what was really dealt with during the negotiations led by Baker. They confirmed that the Israeli camp also felt that the lack of information was having a paralyzing effect. The public at large was confused and very reluctant to engage in any kind of discussion on the topic. One of the few points about the substance of the negotiations that was known to the public was that Shamir put Syria first. Some of the Israeli participants deemed this to be a wise move, as



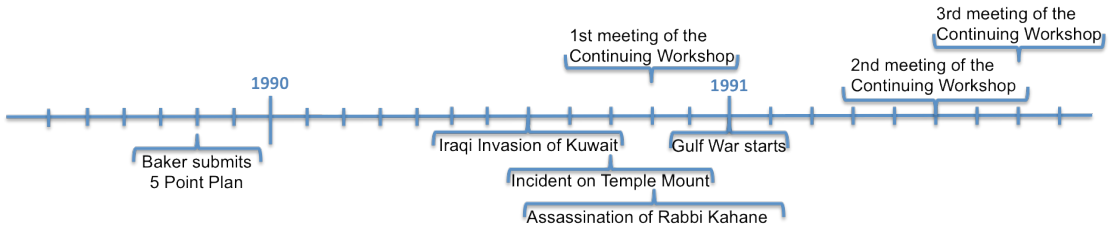
the *Golan Heights*[H17] were an easier topic to tackle compared to any other pertinent issue. The Israeli participants found this tactic to be strategically clever as it enabled Shamir to ensure support from the Likud as well as the Labor party.

Israeli group members added that the Israeli public viewed the Palestinian cause to be marginalized, as no one would object to an agreement reached with Syria without consulting with the Palestinians.

Even King Hussein of Jordan had been reported to having said that he would go along with negotiations without the Palestinians. Some of the Israeli participants deemed the marginalization of the Palestinians to be the reason why Shamir was ready to engage in negotiations. According to the Israeli participants, the task of the Continuing Workshop group, therefore, was to think about ways through which the Palestinians could be placed back in the process and be perceived by the Israeli public as having an impact on negotiations.

Palestinian participants thought that discussing Syria would bring the parties back to the Palestinian issue.

[H17] *The Golan Heights, a 100 square mile area stretching from above Lake Huleh along the River Jordan to south of the Sea of Galilee offering fresh water resources and strategic border control, have been an area of friction between Israel and Syria since the 1949 Arab-Israeli war. Under the UN-brokered armistice agreement the area became a demilitarized zone under Syrian control. Israel nevertheless tried to gain exclusive control over the Sea of Galilee for settlement and economic purposes, which led to repeated military clashes with Syria. In 1967, Israel occupied the Golan Heights during the six-day war. Although the loss of the are was represented a great strategic and economic setback for Syria, border clashes were minimal until the 1973 Arab-Israeli war during which Syria attempted a surprise attack to recover its*



Israeli participant disagreed, as the Israeli public did not perceive it that way. The participants insisted on finding ways to point the Israeli public in the Palestinian direction.

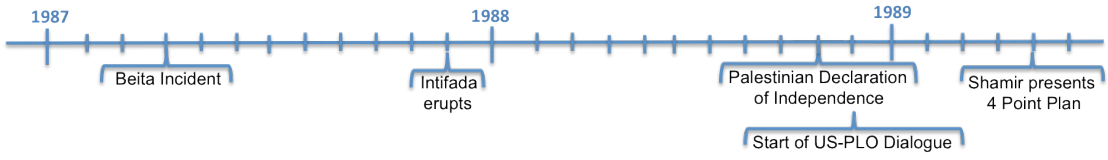
The third party asked the Israeli participants how the Israeli public had reacted to the American initiative and whether the Israeli public supported the points that were suggested by Baker's plan, like the land for peace proposal.

Israeli participants answered that these issues had been pressed to the margins and that the Israeli public was not interested in them. In the participants' view, the reasons for this were, first, that Israelis had learned to live with the Intifada up to the point that it had become almost a non-factor. Second, other issues were more prominent for Israelis, like Russian immigration and the Israeli ability to absorb it, as well as the stagnating economy – the Israeli public did not realize that an agreement with the Palestinians would alleviate this stagnation. Further, the new Shamir coalition had been facing a lot of problems in terms of a split into different factions.

* * *

The following sessions were spent on looking at two papers, one prepared by the Israeli and one by the Palestinian party, which the two had been working on since the last meeting. The group agreed to discuss the Palestinian paper first, as it outlined the most important points in which Palestinians would need reassurance in order to build a trusting relationship

occupied territories. The war ended with the return of a small strip of territory and the establishment of a UN-patrolled buffer zone (Ma'oz, 1995: 210ff.).

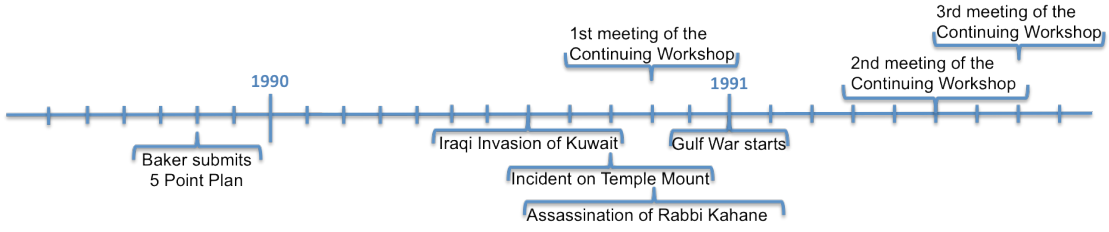


with Israelis. The paper contained some of the controversial issues that had been looked at in previous meetings, like acknowledgement of Palestinian nationhood and the right to self-determination, and caused renewed heightened discussions. Assisted by the third party, the group tried to elaborate a common understanding of what confidence-building measures needed to include, how they needed to be formulated and presented in order to be acceptable for both parties.

In the afternoon sessions the group looked at the paper that had been prepared by the Israeli participants. The Israeli paper followed the same line as the one drafted by the Palestinian group members and enumerated the points in which Israelis needed reassurance from the Palestinians. The paper referred among others to the unclear picture of the Palestinian political elite in the Occupied Territories and their seemingly total dependency on the Diaspora leadership and other Arab political leaders.

Palestinian participants objected to that and affirmed that the local polity had a long history of decisive influence inside the Occupied Territories, which had been expressed through the Intifada.

Israeli participants explained that the Israeli public was aware of how much influence the PLO had within the Occupied Territories and that many Palestinians greatly feared restrictive reactions if they did not comply with PLO objectives. What Israelis felt insecure about was the final objective of the PLO with regard to the land they wanted to integrate into a future Palestinian state, whether it was only the West Bank and Gaza or all of Israel. What had also been causing insecurity among Israelis was doubt whether that they could rely



on what the local PLO said. They feared that more extreme moves would follow from the Diaspora affiliations.

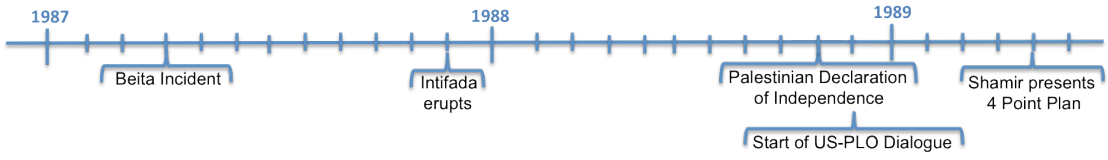
Palestinian participants confirmed that the objective of the Palestinian leadership in terms of a future state was confined to the West Bank and Gaza.

To which the Israeli participants replied that this needed to be communicated in clear terms in order to ease the fear of the Israeli public.

A member of the third party drew attention to the point about finality in the Israeli paper and asked the Palestinian participants whether they could confirm their statement that the future territory of a Palestinian state would definitely be confined to the West Bank and Gaza.

The Palestinian participants confirmed that this was the PLO position and that acceptance of the UN Resolution 242 was final. They drew attention to the 1988 Declaration of Independence, which confirmed exactly that position, although the document had fallen into a trap because of recent political events and was not seen as being a relevant item on the Palestinian agenda anymore. Palestinian participants stated that most Palestinians would nevertheless accept the finality of a two state solution. What would, however, represent an enormous obstacle to Palestinian openness of committing to negotiations on that issue, was the impression that the Israelis did not trust Palestinians to abide by the finality of an accepted and agreed upon solution.

Israeli participants reacted by saying that what would make Israelis trust the Palestinian commitment, was to convince them that the Palestinian delegation would be representative of their community. This would give leverage to the finality of a signed agreement. With this statement, Israeli participants picked up on another point of the paper under discussion, which



referred to the Israeli need to be assured that those who negotiate were tied to the agreed upon solution and able to deliver it.

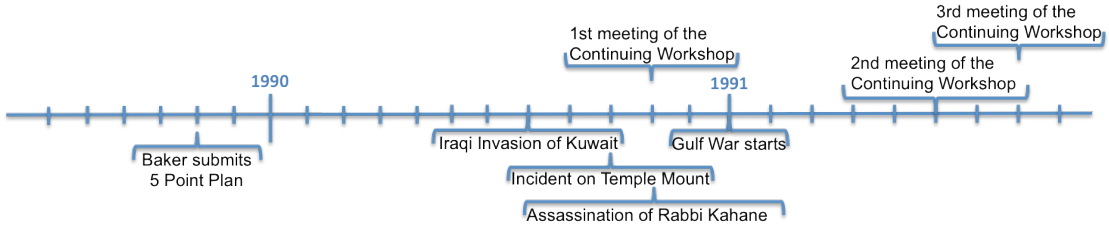
Palestinian participants replied that this would depend on the nature of the delegation and how it would be established. A most convincing Palestinian delegation for both sides would probably be one whose members would be chosen through a joint procedure of both parties.

Israeli group members applauded that and said this would convince at least 55% of the Israeli public to go along and trust the good intentions of Palestinians. With regard to the right of return, Israeli participants said that the problem might be solved if Palestinians could guarantee that the right of return for Palestinian refugees and those living in Diaspora would exclusively apply to the future Palestinian state and not to territories that belonged to the Israeli state.

Palestinian participants answered that this would need to be discussed in more detail.

* * *

During the next session the group picked up on the discussion of the Israeli paper. Palestinian participants expressed their frustration about getting through to the Israeli public in terms of generating reassuring measures. They felt that they had already made reassuring gestures and covered a lot of points that the Israeli paper asked for but had never seen a result or positive resonance. Apparently their statements had not been heard and their gestures not recognized.



Israeli group members replied that it was necessary to repeat such statements and gestures many times.

According to some of the Palestinian participants, it was risky for the Palestinian elite to keep repeating these kinds of gestures without visible success, as it would influence Palestinian public opinion negatively and lead to a loss of the elite's credibility.

The third party suggested to think about ways of injecting such an exchange of reassuring statements into the media and thereby making them part of the public debate in both communities. Further, they resumed the topics which had been presented by the papers and recommended to continue a structured discussion on some of the following topics: thinking about concrete measures to reduce the pain of occupation; finding a way to illustrate Palestinian nationhood and self-determination to the Israeli public in a rhetoric acceptable to both sides without de-legitimizing the Palestinian political elite, finding out how to reassure each side about their sincere commitment to the finality of a negotiated solution, as well as developing mutually acceptable statements on the right of return.

The group agreed to focus on Palestinian nationhood and the right of return as discussion topics for the following sessions.

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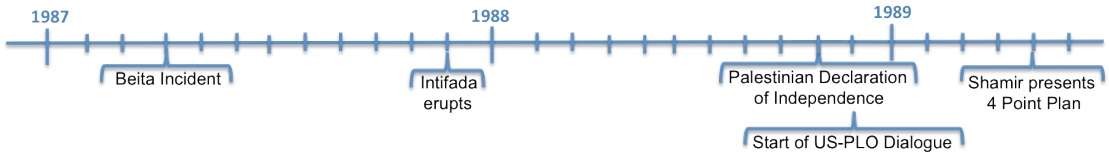
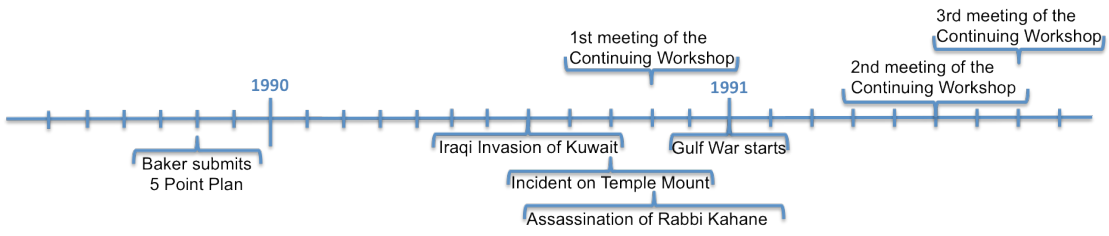
The third party opened the first session of the following day by giving an outline of the agenda for the ensuing discussions. They recalled that the two chosen topics, Palestinian nationhood and the right of return needed to be



looked at within the framework of developing ideas for mutual reassurance. The third party explained that they recommended using the term 'mutual reassurance' instead of 'confidence building measures' because the latter term was linked to a European context and was commonly used to refer to specific measures that should be taken. Mutual reassurance, on the other hand, originated from an analytical framework and could be used as a conceptual tool to identify needs and fears of two conflicting communities. Mutual reassurance was more of a *conception* of what would be required by each conflict party to be reassured, than a *prescription* of delimited steps.

The third party hoped that the group would manage to jointly produce a statement or formulation regarding the chosen topics, which could be used for further dissemination if the participants wished to do so, once the Continuing Workshop was completed. The third party explained that such a statement should include the affirmation from both sides that the statement was responsive to their concerns and only included what each was prepared to say. In terms of Palestinian nationhood such a statement could include the perspectives of both the Israeli and the Palestinian participants: how Israeli participants viewed Palestinian nationhood, how they considered a significant segment of the Israeli public to view it; how Palestinian participants responded to theses images and whether or not it covered what they needed in terms of reassurance. Further, the third party considered it possible for the continuing group to produce an action proposal with regard to one or more discussed issues that would include concrete actions that could be implemented by an identifiable set of people for the purpose of fostering reassurance.

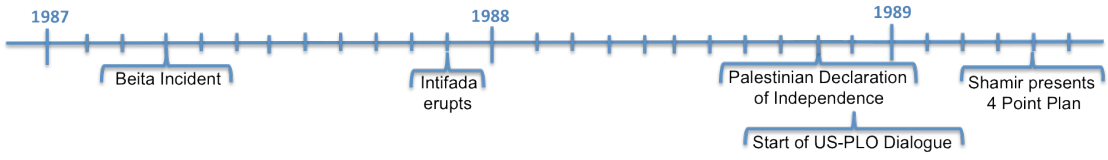


In a next step, the third party asked one Israeli and one Palestinian participant to draft a paper from the discussion content, in order to have written material for the purpose of analyzing the results of their talks. For the following morning, the third party planned to break the plenary group into two sub-groups each discussing one of the drafts. Both sub-groups groups would develop a formulation or action proposal and bring that back to the plenary meeting in the afternoon.

Participants on both sides had doubts whether it was possible for them as an unofficial group to formulate concrete political views and whether they would be able to bridge their widely differing views on certain issues in order to produce a written statement to which they could all agree.

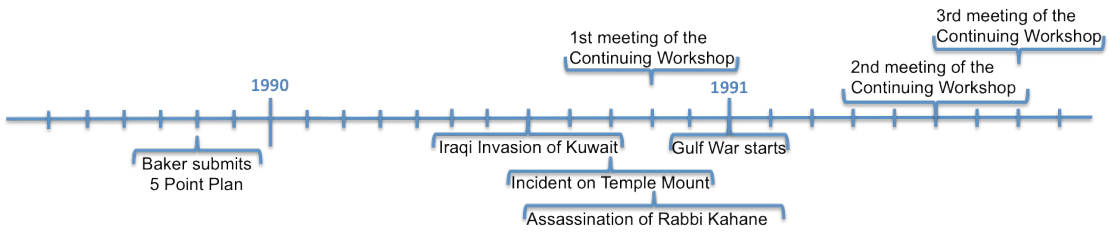
The third party reminded the group that the aim of drafting a paper was not to frame official political views, but rather to formulate ideas that private citizens developed in an analytical academic framework.

Still, some Palestinian participants wanted the group to understand that they were concerned about developing a written statement because of the perceived asymmetry between the two parties. If the Palestinian participants committed to a written formulation it would reflect the commitment of their whole community and leadership, while for the Israeli participants it only reflected the commitment of a segment of the Israeli society and not of their whole people and government. Nevertheless, they were ready to accept that for this group and the purpose of the workshop. The asymmetry of representation was irrelevant, because the group would be able to open channels for improved mutual understanding.



Other Palestinian group members confirmed that they were attending as private individuals and that therefore one party was not more representative than the other. At times personal views might happen to be congruent with one's leadership position or one's society's mainstream opinion and sometimes not. Palestinian participants encouraged those who had expressed their concerns, to have confidence in the process and just take the opportunity of exploring new possibilities without feeling coerced. They added that it was not a problem if some among them could not agree with a proposed idea and that what mattered was the discussion.

Some of the Israeli participants picked up on the argument and prompted the rest of the participants to engage in the experiment of coming up with a written formulation not because they did not have anything to lose but because they could only gain in terms of fostering understanding and acquiring knowledge about each other. They acknowledged the Palestinian perception of asymmetry and explained that although the Israeli participants did not represent their government they were able to exert a lot of influence on the public opinion of their community, probably in a more decisive way than the Palestinian participants were able to reach their society. They added that if the Palestinian participants gave up on working with the Israeli workshop participants, they would also give up on the chance to change Israeli public opinion. Israeli participants confirmed that they did not want to give up but wished to understand Palestinian fears further and find out where and how it was possible to build a bridge between the two sides and how to channel that knowledge to the Israeli public.

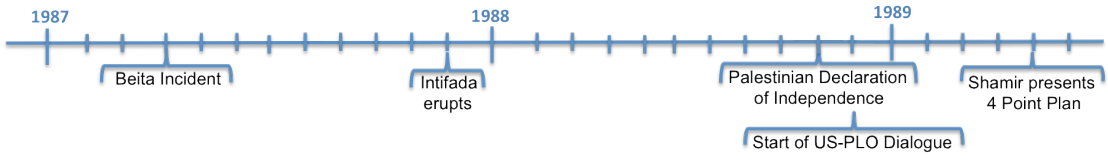


Reflections

The preceding discussion session displayed a true negotiation process. Although identity aspects were not directly addressed, the discussion was responsive to psychological prerequisites that need to be met before identity aspects can be negotiated. By bargaining about workshop procedures, the two parties were able to develop a shared language that generated an atmosphere of working trust. Participants on both sides were able to communicate with each other in a responsive way, taking concerns of the other into account while trying to come up with convincing arguments that would bring other group members to engage in the exercise of formulating joint statements. The discussion proved to be conducive to enabling conflict parties to address core identity aspects in the ensuing sessions.

The second session of the third day dealt with Palestinian nationhood. The third party recalled that the aim was to explore the topic in an analytical way without worrying about the feasibility of an agreement and to separate that concern from the discussion. They added that Palestinian nationhood carried a lot of implications that needed to be included in the discussion, like what the Palestinian nation entailed precisely in terms of its members living inside and outside the Occupied Territories and about its representation.

Palestinian participants began to give a short historical overview of the development of Palestinian nationhood. They referred to the beginning of the 20th century when Palestinians identified themselves as Moslems and did not differentiate themselves from other Islamic states. When nationalist movements in Europe started to emerge, the Arab movement followed. As Arabs were split into separate states, Palestinians started to differentiate themselves and did no



longer call themselves just Arabs but Palestinians. Palestinian national identity was reinforced by the 1948 events. The Palestinians who were able to remain on their land of origin, started to institutionalize their national identity by writing down their history and establishing a political and social framework.

Israeli participants replied that most Israelis accepted that Palestinians were a nation. They explained that those Israelis who denied that Palestinians were a nation did so because they were scared that acceptance of it would entail a concession from their part that might jeopardize the existence of their state. What was tremendously important for Israelis with regard to the issue was to learn what Palestinian nationhood entailed, especially in terms of Palestinian territorial claims. Some participants asked whether one could say that every Arab between Jordan and the Mediterranean was a Palestinian.

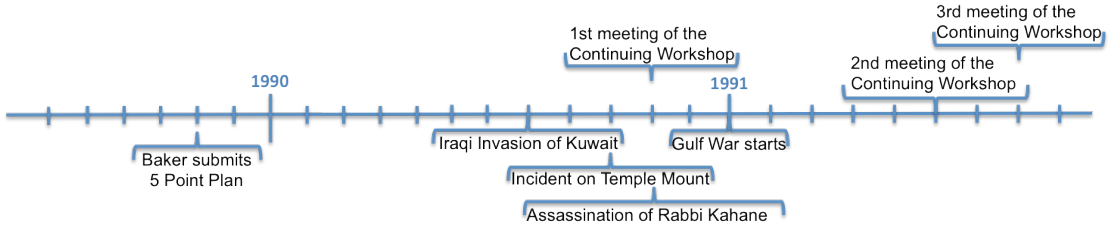
Palestinian participants confirmed that this was the case, except for Palestinians living in Israel. The participants viewed those Palestinians to have the same status as a Jewish citizen in the US.

Israeli group members asked whether or not the nationality of such a person would be considered to be Israeli.

Palestinian participants answered that it would be up to each person to decide about that.

An Israeli participant than pointed out that it was necessary to distinguish between the concept of citizenship and nationhood, as the two were not correlated.

The group then engaged in a discussion about the relationship of a future Palestinian state to Jordan and the status of Palestinians who would continue living in Jordan.

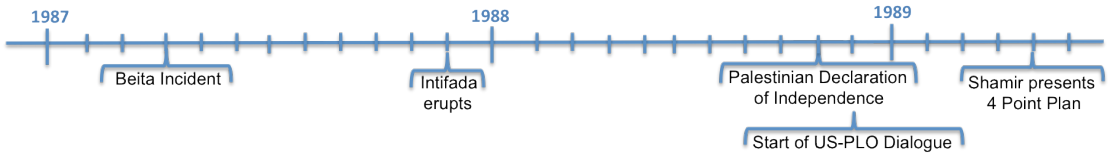


Palestinian participants explained that their status would be the same as of any other nationals of a sovereign state living in another country. They saw Palestinians to be free to decide to remain in Jordan or in Israel after a Palestinian state would be established and be loyal to their country of residence without jeopardizing their Palestinian identity.

Palestinian participants made it very clear that their concept of nationhood and its expression in terms of exerting the right to self-determination as a nation did not endanger the existence of the Israeli state, that Palestinians would accept the finality of the borders of their future state, and that they would not interfere in either Israel's or Jordan's internal affairs. They confirmed that this was also true on behalf of their compatriots who would remain in Israel or Jordan. They assured that their statements were to be understood as gestures of mutual reassurance and asked the Israeli participants to give them a reassuring signal in return.

The third party appreciated the Palestinian move and asked them to assist the Israelis to formulate a statement that would reassure them.

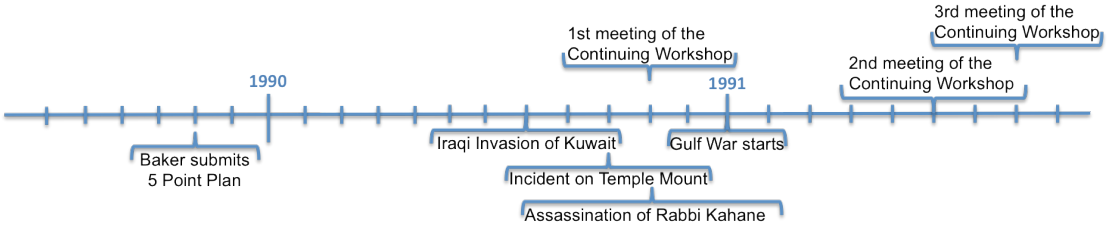
In response, Israeli participants confirmed that the right to self-determination of Palestinians was widely accepted not just by the people in the group but also among the Israeli public. They were of the view that this could be stated in a public way to Israelis and Palestinians. They added that the existence of Palestinians as a people was fully accepted by the Israeli public not least as a consequence of the Intifada, which established the fact that Palestinians would never concede to be absorbed by Israel, Jordan, Syria, or by any other state.



Further, Israeli participants added that it was just as vital for Israelis that Palestinians accepted Israeli national existence, as it was the other way around. More so, it was essential for Israeli participants on a personal level as well as terms of being members of the Israeli polity that Palestinians understood who Israelis were as a people. They saw this mutual acceptance and understanding of each other's identity as being an indispensable foundation for peaceful relations, especially with view to a probable interdependence between the two political entities.

Palestinian group members said they were very pleased with this analysis and agreed that peace could not be reached if the two sides were reluctant to exchange recognition of their national existence. They also agreed that only if Israelis could understand the complex nature of Palestinian nationality, it would become possible for them to deal with other issues that were vital for Palestinians, like the right of return. Palestinian participants confirmed that they were able to understand that Israelis felt threatened by the refugee problem.

Palestinian participants explained, however, that the violent attacks that threatened Israelis stemmed from the fact that the Palestinian people was forced to live in two dimensions, some of them in the Occupied Territories and others in Diaspora, and more prominently, that some of them had to live in refugee camps and were stateless. The only way to end violence was through the establishment of a Palestinian state and by making sure that this state would absorb the Palestinian people within its territory encompassing the West Bank and Gaza.

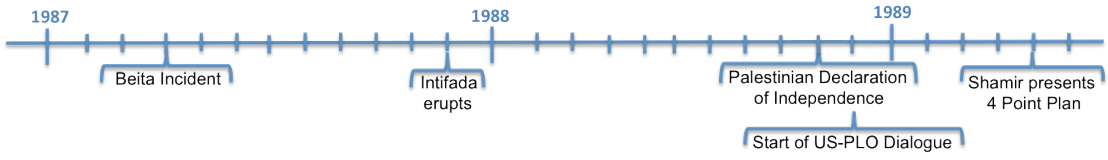


Reflections

The foregoing discussion session testified to a crucial moment in terms of displaying an ultimate identity change, namely removing the negation of the other as a central component of each conflict party's identity. First, participants of both parties told each other how important it was that the other accepted their national identity. Second, both sides affirmed that they did indeed accept the existence of the other as a nation. In the following session, the group turned to the discussion of the right of return.

Palestinian participants explained that for them the right of return contained two layers, a theoretical and a practical one. The theoretical level was about the recognition of this right. They stressed how important this recognition was for the Palestinian people on a theoretical or more particularly on a psychological level, independent of a later practical solution. If Israelis would insist on denying, that Palestinians – at least theoretically – had the right to claim to return to the homes they lost in 1948, Palestinians would experience that denial as an enormous injustice imposed by a powerful party on a powerless one. They added that receiving such recognition did not entail that a given person would indeed try to return to a home that did not exist anymore, as this was unfeasible. Palestinian participants made it clear that what Palestinians needed in a most vital way was to receive Israeli recognition of their right to return on a theoretical level as a form of acknowledgment of Palestinian dignity.

Some Israeli participants replied that from an Israeli perspective recognizing the Palestinian right of return did not equal taking responsibility for the injustice that Palestinian people had experienced. In Israeli eyes the



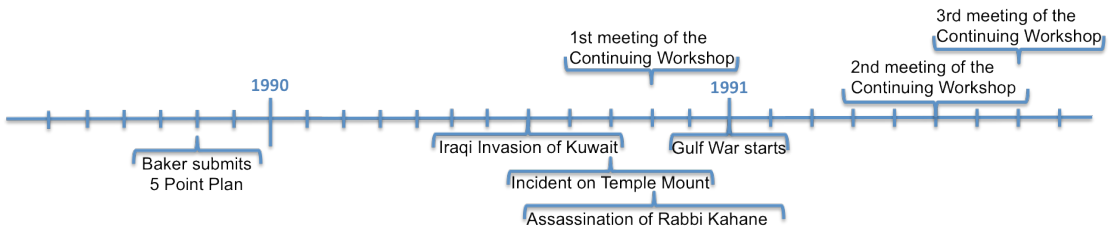
responsibility for what happened during the war between 1947 and 1949 was shared, as both sides had suffered from those events. They explained, that to grant Palestinians the right of return on those premises was an unacceptable for Israelis, as it would mean for them to say that the state of Israel was born in sin.

Other Israeli participants added that in the Israeli view, Palestinians were the ones who committed a sin in 1947. While the Israelis were ready to accept the partition plan and the very disagreeable borders, the Palestinians were the ones who started the war and thereby created the refugee problem they were all facing today. Responsibility for the refugee problem was, thus, on the Palestinians not on the Israelis. According to those participants' view, the refugee problem was key to a possible ending of the conflict. If it remained only vaguely unresolved a new conflict would ensue after the establishment of a Palestinian state, triggered by one million refractory refugees.

Palestinian participants then said, that the refugee problem did not just have a political but also a humanitarian dimension. Even if the refugees would have a passport, a flag, and an address, their living conditions would remain deplorable and would eventually lead to a renewed upheaval. Further, they suggested not to use the term *right of return*, as it connoted an *a priori* concession in Israeli eyes, but to speak of *a solution of the refugee problem*.

The third party pointed out that the strong reactions from the Israeli side showed how much reassurance they needed with regard to this issue and reminded the group that the objective of the discussion was to think about reassuring measures.

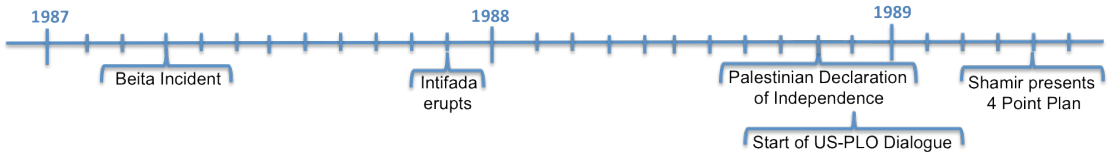
Palestinian participants insisted on their point, that the Israelis and the rest of the world needed to acknowledge the Palestinian right to claim back



their former homes on a theoretical level and trust them that they would deal with the refugee problem within the agreed upon borders of a future Palestinian state.

Several Israeli participants replied that they did not want to negate the Palestinian right to claim their losses, but that they just could not conceive of the practical implications that the acceptance of their claim would have. With regard to reassurance they said they would feel more comfortable if the group could come up with a formulation containing the concern about the practicality of dealing with the refugee problem within the borders of a Palestinian state. Further, the formulation should clearly express that the Palestinian state did not have any territorial aspirations to solve the refugee problem within the boundaries of the state of Israel. They suggested that Palestinians should declare unilaterally their claim of lost property and ancient homeland, while Israelis would officially state their claim for Eretz Israel. Through such honest statements of their respective claims a compromise was much more prone to emerge than from any kind of well formulated promises.

Some Palestinian participants agreed that the problem to be solved was about refugees and not about the right of return. However, the solution of the refugee issue would mostly stem from the right of return. They affirmed that returning to Israel was out of the question and that granting the right of return to Palestinians would in no way threaten Israel's existence or the Jewish character of the state. All that was needed to successfully solve the refugee problem through the acknowledgement of the right of return was to discuss it further. In the eyes of the Palestinian group members the Israeli participants' readiness to discuss the problem was a gesture of reassurance in itself.

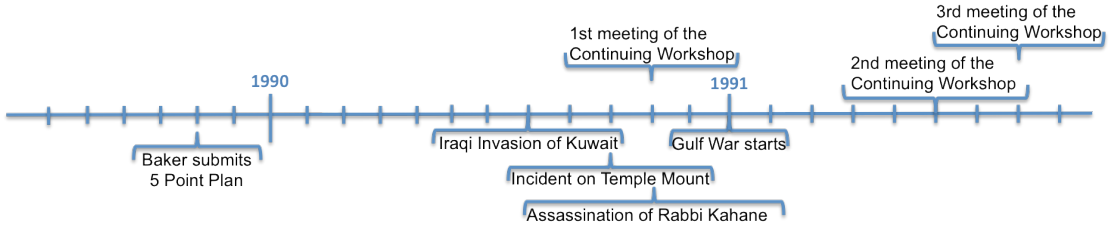


The third party directed the group's attention toward the multiple meanings of the term "right of return". One of them referred to the right to claim lost properties, another one to the right to receive compensation for the deep-seated grievances caused through the unjust loss of homes, while a third meaning pointed to the right to own houses and land in general. The third party assumed that splitting up the complex term might help all members of the group to understand the sense of injustice that people have suffered, how important it was to recognize that sense of injustice, and to grant the establishment of new homes.

The group welcomed that statement.

Israeli participants confirmed that it was easier to acknowledge Palestinian loss than to acknowledge the right of return as such because there was a big difference between offering compensation and taking responsibility. As the discussion had shown, from an Israeli point of view the question of responsibility for the loss was debatable. They added that it was enormously important to them that Israeli acknowledgment of Palestinian grievances was met with a reciprocal move from the Palestinian side. They made it clear that it was vital for Israelis that Palestinians acknowledged the Israeli right of return as well and Palestinians realized that Israel also deplored grievances. They continued explaining that it was essential for them that Palestinians would understand that Israelis were ready to compromise on areas, to which they feel ideologically tied, for the sake of peace.

A third party member asked the Israeli participants whether they meant that they ideologically claimed a greater Israel but were willing to give up that claim in order to achieve peace.



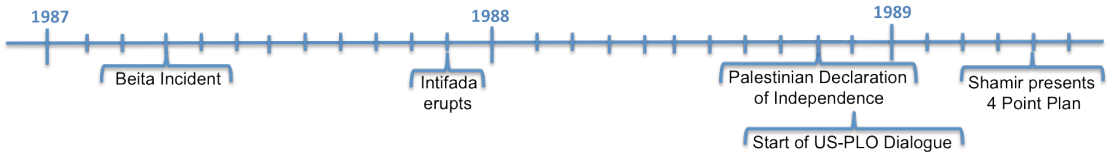
Two Israeli participants simultaneously answered that their previous statement expressed exactly that.

Palestinian participants reacted to the previous Israeli statement about the Palestinians having started the war in 1947 and that they were therefore responsible for their own suffering. They reminded the group that Palestinians had been repeatedly expelled from their territories long before the war started. Further, they saw the war as having resulted from the way Israelis imposed their state. Some Palestinian participants took the view that the group could either continue a futile discussion about history or acknowledge that the situation was different for each side but that they both needed each other and had to make concessions in order to reach peace.

Israeli group members held that historical realities could not be changed.

Some Palestinian participants countered by asking the Israeli colleagues whether or not it was conceivable for all of them that the political situation was changing toward taking on new realities. They suggested that the Palestinian right of return should be recognized by both parties for the following three reasons: first, because a political settlement was the only way to reach an agreement; secondly, because of the moral reasons that had been reiterated during the previous discussion; and thirdly, because the right had been recognized by the UN and international law and was therefore of legal legitimacy.

Other Palestinian participants agreed with the stand of leaving historical accounts out of the equation. It was important to understand each other's histories and grievances, and that they could and need not to be reversed or set right by a negotiated solution. Palestinian thought was not a continuum from



ancient past to the present point but was future oriented toward a political settlement. The Palestinian participants found reciprocity to be a good way of proceeding but said that acceptance of Israel as a Jewish state represented an obstacle to this attitude.

Israeli participants reacted to that statement with some frustration and asked why Palestinian participants had difficulties to accept the religious nature of Israel.

The Palestinian participants explained that the non-Jewish minority in Israel would always be at a disadvantage.

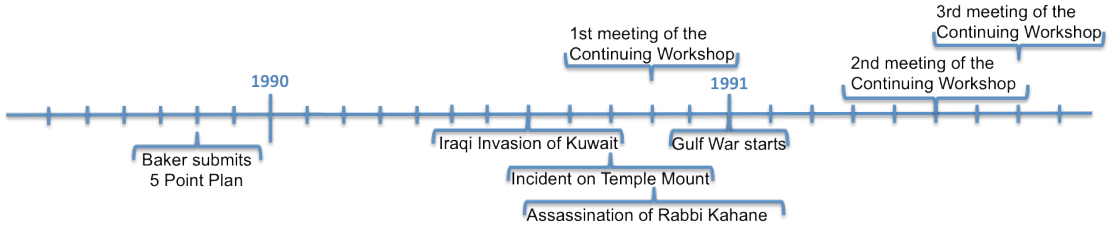
Israeli participants answered that minorities in all states faced certain difficulties of getting heard.

Palestinian participants countered that in the US the Bill of Rights did not decide about the rights of its citizens on the basis of religion. They felt that a Jew in Brooklyn had more rights than a Palestinian in Israel.

Reflections

As the group had been able to successfully engage in the complex discussion about the right of return, the difficulty of acknowledging responsibility for what had happened in the past surfaced again. The discussion about taking on responsibility led to a difficult confrontation with each party's own history and elements of their national narratives. It became clear how interdependent the narratives of the two parties are, and that accepting the other's narrative may entail a change in ones one.

The discussion was eased when the third party intervened by suggesting to split the term right of return into different connotations and to look at them



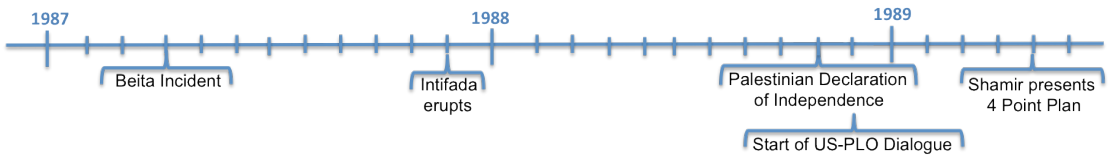
one at a time. The intervention showed how the introduction of a conceptual tool, can help to transform a quarrel into an analytic discussion.

Through this intervention, the Israeli group was able to formulate that they as well deplored grievances for which they needed acknowledgement. Israeli participants even upheld that they also needed *their* right of return to be acknowledged. This statement demonstrated that reciprocity in dialogue and gesture is pivotal for resolving conflict issues. The statement touched again on the acknowledgement of national existence, which a confirmed right of return implies.

In addition, the Israeli statement revealed that Israeli participants were aware that it was necessary and possible that the ideological dream of greater Israel (an element of their national narrative that jeopardizes the acknowledgement of a Palestinian state) no longer informed their political program.

The subsequent statement of the Palestinian group made clear that participants started to realize that each group had experienced past events differently and that these experiences had consequently formed different national narratives. Both of these narratives were true to the respective group and, therefore, had to be accepted as such by the other.

A further decisive step in the confrontation occurred, when Israeli group members said that historical realities cannot be reversed and Palestinian participants countered that what *was* changeable, was the political present by integrating new realities.



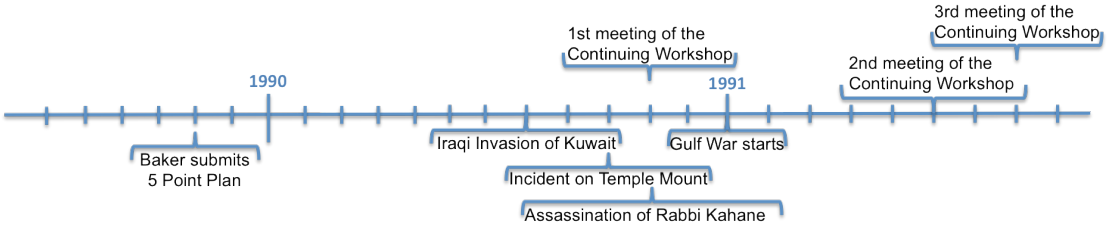
At this moment a true identity change occurred, as some of the participants realized that identities can be altered by including new facts into exiting perceptions.

Subgroup Discussions

The afternoon sessions of the forth day were spent in mixed sub-groups accompanied by a split third party team. One group went through the paper that had been prepared by an Israeli participant while the other group looked at the one prepared by a Palestinian participant. The objective for both sub-groups was to formulate concrete ideas about how to provide the assurances that each side asked for, while third party members would take notes of the findings for the purpose of eventually putting together a written formulation.

The first item that was discussed in the sub-group looking at the paper drafted by an Israeli group member concerned violence. The group agreed to formulate a paragraph on the issue and to head it with the title: condemnation of murder of civilians. The group reached consensus that the killing of civilians on either side was a horrendous act, which reinforced the dehumanized image each held of the other.

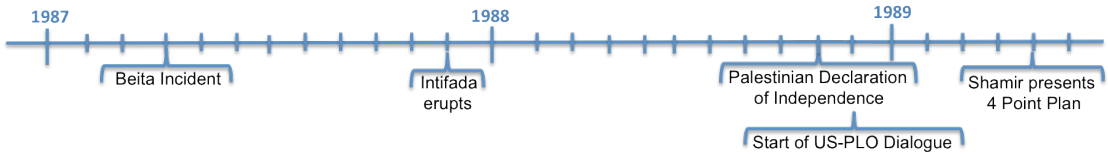
Israeli participants suggested that their Palestinian colleagues could lobby within their community for forming a petition against civilian killings and address it to their leadership, a measure that should be reciprocated by the Israeli participants lobbying for a petition addressed to their government to freeze settlement construction.



In response, Palestinian participants told a story about a suicide attack that had been launched in an Israeli bus. A group of Israelis then asked a group of Palestinians to condemn the attack. They did and produced a document with 22 signatures and published it in an Arabic newspaper. According to the Palestinian participants, the Israelis who asked for such a statement showed that they did not think of all Palestinians as killers, but were able to differentiate between fanatically orientated individuals and the larger non-violent Palestinian population. The Palestinian participants pointed out that this had to be noted as a decisive progress in changing the existing enemy image. However, the Palestinian public never heard such differentiated statements from the Israeli side and did not ask for such statements either. Palestinian participants found that condemnation of violence should occur on both sides. Both sides needed to be seen as victims of a situation that needed to be changed in order to stop violence.

Then, the group agreed to write a statement that there should be a general public condemnation of indiscriminate killings of civilians, and that this joint condemnation should be issued by a group of prominent Israelis and Palestinians representing a wide spectrum of political opinion. The statement further included that the joint condemnation should include the acknowledgment that both sides were victims of the situation.

The group then moved on to the next issue, which referred to dialogue. Both sides agreed that there should be increased possibilities for Israelis and Palestinians to exchange their views. The group discussed existing hurdles to increased interactions. A member of the group mentioned that Palestinians would sometimes refuse to attend professional meetings with Israeli colleagues



because they feared that their community might interpret their participation as an act of pretending that occupation was non-existent. A Palestinian participant mentioned a personal experience where an Israeli colleague asked for a donated supply of children's books to a hospital. The participant managed to collect 300 books but when trying to deliver the books to the hospital, the colleague told the participant that they were not allowed to accept one book donated by an Arab.

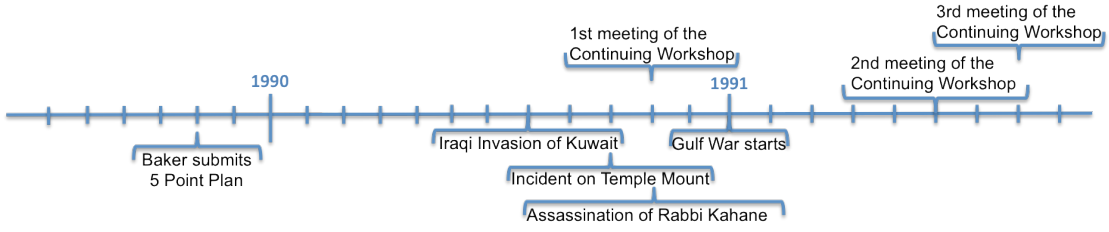
The third party recommended taking limitations of that kind into consideration when formulating a statement on increased contact and dialogue and to accept limitations caused by the existing situation, as anything else would only have a backfiring effect.

Israeli participants picked up on the possibility of diversifying dialogue through the media. They saw this as a possibility for changing the state of ignorance in which each side found itself about the other. The problem was not only that each side knew so little about the other but also that they did not realize how much they did not know. They explained that this ignorance led to fear and refusal of agreeing to publish statements made by representatives of the other side in their own press.

The group agreed to an exchange of published articles in the press on both sides on a regular basis as well as appearances on television as a means to break-up the monolithic view each side had of the other.

The group then moved on to discuss the issue of what could be done to increase acceptance of a gradualist approach toward peacemaking.

Palestinian group members said they had no problem with a gradualist peace process as long as interim stages like Baker's proposed self-government



status would not become permanent and they could be sure that the negotiations would lead to a final separate state. They made it clear that if they could be sure that the final step of a gradualist approach was to attain an independent self-determined state they would agree to it.

Both sides agreed that a lot of time was needed to establish a Palestinian state and that therefore there needed to be interim phases.

The group then tackled the issue of security.

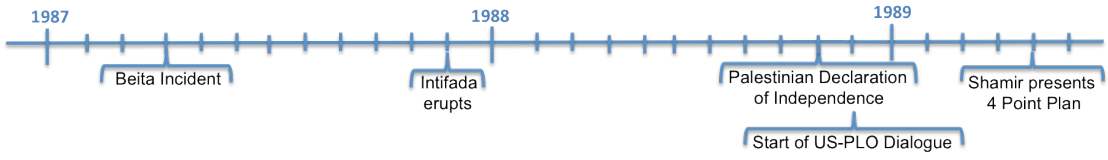
Israeli participants explained that they were aware that Palestinians viewed Israeli fears about the security of their state to be unreal and to serve only as a tactical instrument. The Israeli participants assured them that their fear was real and that they wished to have more room for explaining them why.

Palestinian participants responded that both sides had security needs and that they also felt the issue needed to be discussed in more depth especially with regard to other Arab countries involved in the conflict.

* * *

The other sub-group discussed the paper that had been presented by a Palestinian group member. The third party team recalled that the purpose of the discussion was to look at some of the items proposed in the paper and think about concrete steps to address them by building reassuring measures.

The group first addressed the issue of how to improve living conditions in the Occupied Territories in terms of making education more accessible. Palestinian participants asked for the reopening of universities that had been closed during the Intifada. Israeli participants did not see this to be possible



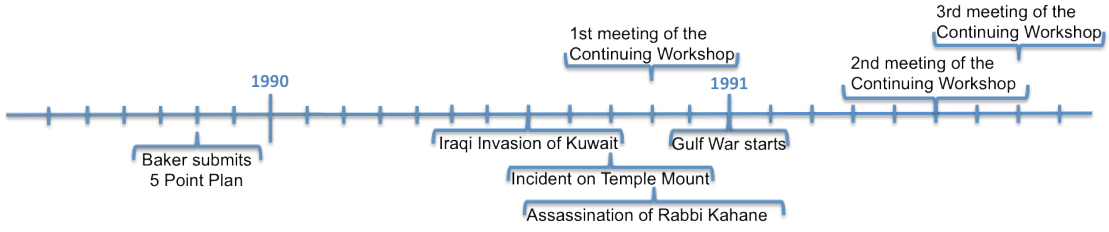
with the current leadership. They directed the focus of the discussion more towards reopening schools that had been closed because curfews prevented pupils as well as teachers to come to school and because they did not have enough funds to pay teachers. Israeli group members recommended increasing the exchange of information between schoolteachers and authorities also on a political level.

In a next step, the group looked at how to improve the economy in the Occupied Territories. An Israeli participant suggested lobbying with the Israeli Division of Labor for the purpose of developing concrete measures. Those measures could be directed towards stopping discrimination against the West Bank and Gaza; towards increasing EU and US financing; towards the development of better support systems in health, education, road construction and maintenance as well as for the recruitment of the local police. Further, they advocated revising the tax system in a way that indirect taxes paid for social security and the like by Palestinians who worked in Israel would flow back to the Occupied Territories. A Palestinian group member added that taxes should be collected on an economic and not on a political basis. The participant explained that their tax rates were estimated on an extremely arbitrary footing.

The next item tackled by the group was the right to political expression.

Some Israeli group members said to have problems with supporting the right for political expression under occupation.

Palestinian participants replied that if the Israeli government continued to prohibit the distribution of leaflets, a free press, the organization of political meetings and the existence of political parties, they would greatly encourage violence.



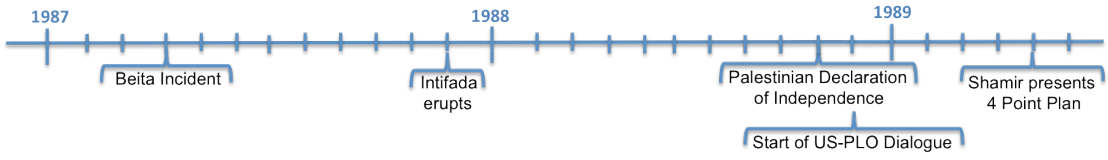
Israeli participants acknowledged that a vicious circle had ensued from how the Israeli government asked to negotiate with inhabitants of the Occupied Territories but failed to allow them to get politically organized. The only possibility the participants saw for stepping out of that vicious circle was to create a consensus within the Palestinian community on what their political program should look like and communicate that to the Israeli authorities before they would start implementing it in terms of political organization.

The discussion then led on to addressing the problem regarding Palestinian family reunions. Israeli fear of Palestinian political upheaval had resulted in prohibiting family reunions.

Palestinian group members said that even husbands and wives were sometimes unable to live together if one of them needed a residence permit that had to be renewed every three weeks at the cost of 100 US Dollars.

The group then talked about how to counteract Israeli settlement policy.

Some Israeli participants viewed that issue to be the most important one to lobby against and the most controversial topic in Israeli society. They explained that the reasons for this were fourfold: first settlements were very cost intensive; second most settlers were of an extreme right wing orientation which was not shared by most of the Israeli public; third there existed an American and an international campaign against it; and fourth the government had no argument to prove that settlements were not impeding peace. Some Israeli participants suggested the following measures to lobby against the settlement policy: by establishing a settlement watch through Peace Now; by informing the US-press about how much of their funds were spent in the West Bank; and to organize demonstrations inside settlement areas. But not all Israeli



group members supported that proposition or were able to agree to sign a joint statement that condemned the establishment of new settlements.

Plenary Sessions

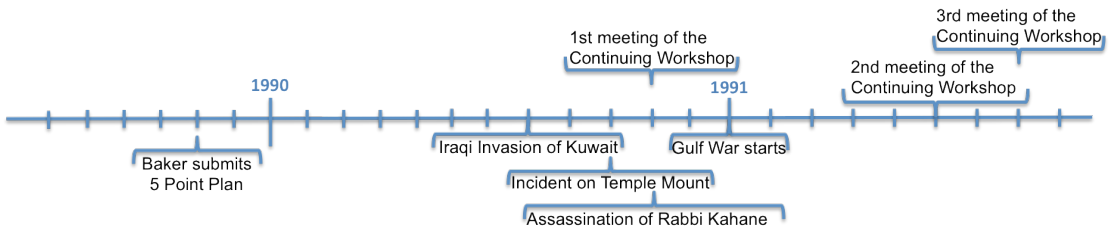
On the fifth day, the group went through the two papers in a plenary session and worked on the discussed formulation in precise details in order to merge the two documents into one. The participants spent time on discussing the exact meaning of certain expressions and their possible interpretation of their respective communities. It became clear to them that the choice of the accurate wording was decisive for the acceptance of a formulation as well as for its reassuring effect. Finding the right terms to express extremely complex realities proved to be a real challenge and brought the participants back to some of their most pertinent subjects, questions, and concerns with regard to the conflict. In some instances the group members re-experienced certain aspects of the foregoing talks.

The first formulation, that the group tried to formalize, captured their conception of nationhood and its implications for both parties in terms of exercising their right to self-determination within agreed-upon borders.

Some Palestinian participants had a problem that the formulation read *within agreed-upon borders* while they did not even have borders yet.

The third party reminded them that the purpose of the formulation was to serve as a reassurance measure and asked the Palestinian participants whether or not the formulation reached that aim.

The Palestinian group members confirmed that.



The group then moved on to look at the formulation on the right of return. This issue gave rise to a renewed quarrel.

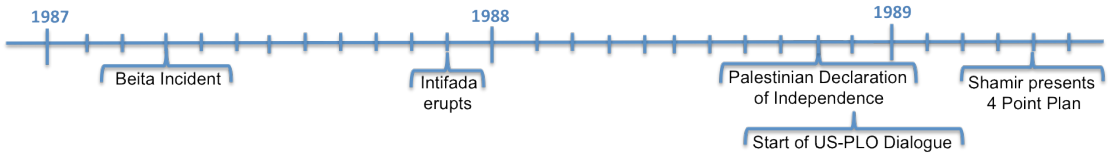
Palestinian group members explained that there was no way for them to give up their claim for recognition of their right of return from the Israelis.

Israeli participants were ready to recognize that both sides needed to deal with the problem of Palestinian refugees before a negotiated solution could be reached. However, they were not ready to recognize the right of return as such and in that wording.

The third party reminded the participants that the purpose of the workshop was not to produce negotiation statements for official purposes but that it would be useful to capture the progress that had been made by the group. According to the third party the main achievements of the discussions were, that Palestinians confirmed that they were prepared to take several steps to meet Israeli objectives if their right of return was recognized; and that Israelis were not ready to acknowledge the right of return but came close to it. The gap on that issue was therefore not closed but narrowed.

Israeli participants, opposing the recognition of the right of return, proposed the following formula for a joint statement: while Palestinians remained firm that the right of return could not be compromised and Israelis said they could not recognize that right despite their acknowledgment of Palestinian suffering, both sides agreed that they needed to solve this problem in ensuing negotiations.

The group then moved on to discuss the issue about the finality of a negotiated agreement.

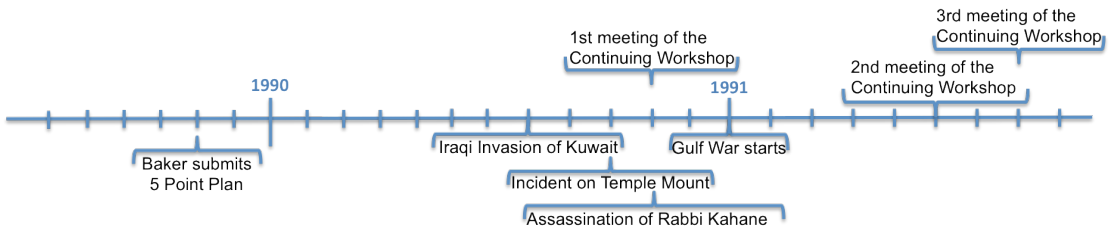


Israeli participants found the formulation, which the sub-group had elaborated, to be acceptable but quite unkind to the Israeli side. The formulation read that the Palestinian movement had officially accepted the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, alongside of Israel, as the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and that this decision had received widespread support in Palestinian communities, inside and outside the Occupied Territories. According to some Israeli participants, the majority of Israelis would feel uncomfortable with the language that had been used and suggested to replace the initial statement of their formulation with the PNC Resolution of 1988.

The Palestinian group members welcomed that suggestion. They on their part expressed to having a problem with the formulation of the Israeli concerns that the PLO leadership's commitment to that solution was not genuine but only a tactical maneuver to ultimately reach their original goal of destroying Israel in stages; and that if they really were genuine about negotiating a two-state agreement, the PLO would be unable to persuade its constituencies to accept the finality of such an agreement.

The group engaged in a discussion about a better wording of the issue and agreed that the formulation should read that: the Palestinian participants of the workshop were prepared to assure Israelis that they, along with the PLO and the Palestinian people, viewed the two-state solution to permanently resolve the conflict.

In a next step, the group reviewed the formulation on Israeli settlement policy.



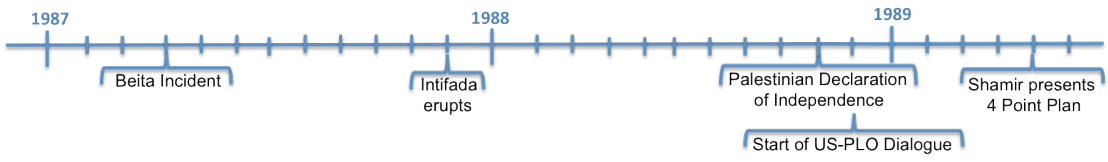
Palestinian participants expressed how important a strong statement from their Israeli colleagues on this subject was for them in terms of reassurance.

Some Israeli participants said to have difficulties with expressing a total ban on building settlements. Nevertheless, the group managed to agree to a formulation reading that: Israeli workshop participants considered settlements in the Occupied Territories to represent an obstacle to peace and insisted that settlements and all related activities should be stopped.

The third party then recaptured that the group had been able to agree to three joint formulations on nationhood, finality of agreement, and settlement policy, which they found to be a very good result. They also showed themselves happy about the progress that had been made on the very difficult issue of the right of return They felt that most participants learned something new with regard to the topic, which should be considered as a successful outcome, considering that all workshop participants were already very knowledgeable about the matter. They reminded the group that not having reached an agreement on a joint formulation on the topic was not to be considered as having failed but that the decrease of the gap between the two sides' perception was an achievement. Furthermore, it would still be possible for the group members to reach an agreement at some point in the future.

Reflections

The agreed formulations regarding the two parties' conception of nationhood, the finality of a negotiated agreement, and Israeli settlement policy show that identity elements have been successfully negotiated. The most prominent element among them surely is the inclusion of the other party's

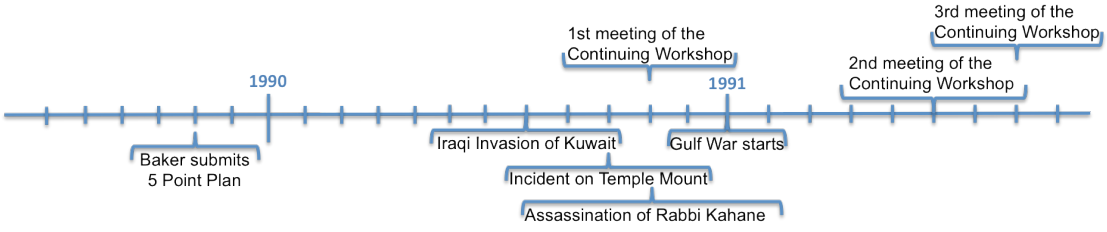


existence as a nation into the identity perception of each group. This move was only possible, because each group heard and understood the other's concerns and needs and because both groups were able to comprehensively communicate their understanding to the other. Thereby one group was able to formulate their conditions in terms that were non-threatening and acceptable to the other group.

During the last session of the third Continuing Workshop meeting the group looked again at the formulations they managed to agree on. The third party encouraged the participants to think about possible ways to make further use of the formulations also with regard to the future of the group. The third party reminded the group members that, according to their initial agreement, these formulations could be published as long as they were kept confidential in the sense that none of its content would be attributed to a specific person.

A Palestinian participant said to have reread the formulations and to feel happy about the achievement they all made together and congratulated the group on that.

An Israeli participant suggested that the group should meet again for at least one more time to discuss the link of the Israeli-Palestinian with the Israeli-Arab conflict, the right to self-determination and its implications, security, the future status of Jerusalem, insurrection and terrorism, settlements and future procedures in relation to them, as well as the refugee problem. Another Israeli participant asked what the group should do if the current peace process failed. The Israeli colleague answered that in that case the group should meet once a year.



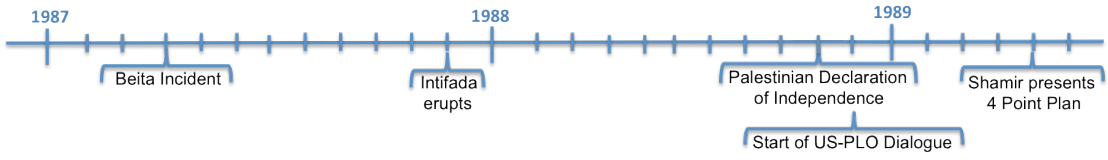
A Palestinian group member found that to be a good idea.

Another Israeli participant added that even if the group was not to meet again, the meetings had been very important, as each party's understanding of their anxieties and fears increased as well as their knowledge of what motivated their actions. The participant was sure that many group members would be able to use the new insight within the framework of their professional activities.

A Palestinian group member found the agreed-upon formulations should be disseminated among the public of both sides as it would reassure them and make them more ready to believe in the possibility of a conflict settlement. Further, the participant suggested informing the Israeli, Palestinian and US leaderships about the newly gained insight on how gaps between Israelis and Palestinians could be bridged. The participant envisaged sending the group's formulations together with an explanatory cover letter to opinion leaders on each side as well as to people in Baker's entourage.

An Israeli participant agreed with that and was in favor of publishing their achievement with names as that would prevent suspicion among potential audiences on both sides and provide more weight to their endeavor. The participant further suggested to include Palestinians from Jerusalem in future meetings and to continue to prepare discussion papers in advance.

A Palestinian participant agreed to the suggestion of making the names of the group members known when publishing the formulations and added that a publication should include a statement on the fact that the workshop activities had been active prior to the current peace process as an ongoing effort and that it was not just a reaction to the official procedure. The participant continued to stress that this workshop had shown how important it was to address the Israeli



public and alter their conflict perception. The opportunity to do so should therefore not be missed.

An Israeli participant expressed to have difficulties with signing a document produced by a group that counted a member of the PLO.

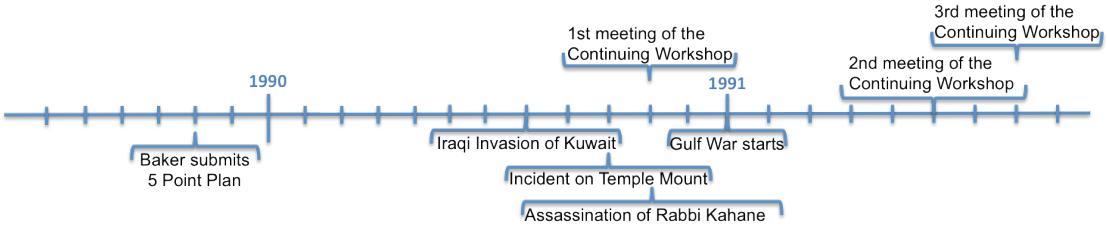
The group then agreed to only publish the results of the workshop in their own names or anonymously.

A Palestinian group member then asked how it would be possible to reassure their respective communities that way.

An Israeli participant answered that one way of reassurance would result from participants' personal testimonies in conversation with compatriots about the stand of Palestinians and Israelis on issues discussed in the workshop. For example, if an Israeli participant were to be asked about a specific issue and the chances to reach agreement on it with the Palestinians, the participant would be able to give a steadfast answer and justify it with testifying of personally having discussed it with an influential Palestinian.

The third party explained that the group members should make two important distinctions with regard to dissemination. One was to distinguish between signing a document and saying to have met with this or that person. The other was about distinguishing between a political manifesto and statements that resulted from an exercise of jointly finding formulations to which both sides could agree. They repeated that the group agreed on disseminating their formulations without referring to people's names and providing information that would allow for indirectly identifying names.

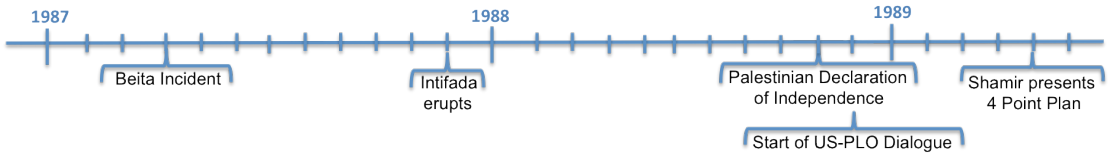
The group then engaged in a discussion about the future of the continuing group. They agreed that the group members should remain the same



as far as possible for at least one next meeting. Only at a later stage if, for example, they would agree to annual meetings participants could vary.

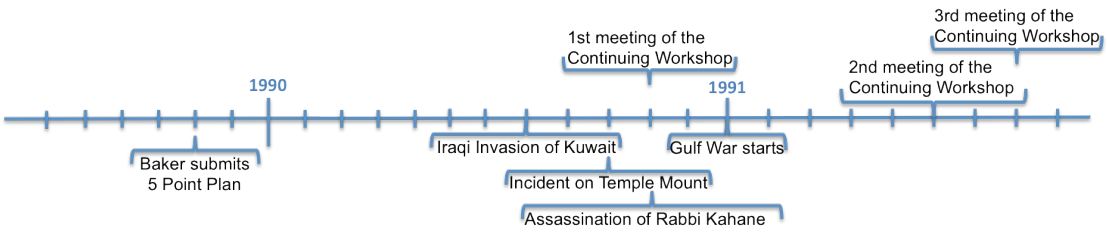
The third party said that with regard to the workload it would be reasonable to schedule two more meetings. To make that possible the group members would all have to commit themselves to support fundraising and engage in preparatory work.

Group members were very firm on providing that commitment and offered to write a joint Palestinian-Israeli letter to potential donors. They further agreed on keeping the format and ground rules of the workshop and on leaving it open whether renewed discussions would result in a publishable document.



Notes

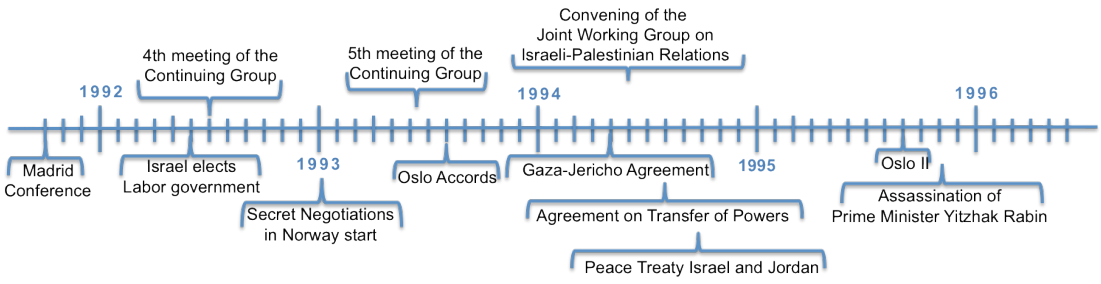
[1] Anderson defined a nation as "an imagined political community". According to Anderson a nation is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their community (Anderson, 1991: 6). To underline his designation Anderson quotes Seton-Watson's definition that "a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation or behave as if they formed one" (Seton-Watson, 1977: 5).



6 Interactive Problem Solving during Official Negotiations

Before the continuing group was able to convene again, the US and the USSR launched the official Peace Process in Madrid on October 30, 1991. Participation of the parties to the negotiations followed a formal letter of invitation from the conveners dated October 18, containing the parameters for the peace conference. The convening of the Madrid Conference and the ensuing negotiations owed much to the strong position of the United States after the Gulf War and its willingness to confirm its credibility in the Middle East as well as to the diplomatic abilities of US Secretary of State, James Baker. By engendering the formation of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, Baker managed to broker the diametrically different positions between the Palestinians, who wanted to negotiate the parameters of a Palestinian state with PLO representatives and Israel, who wanted to negotiate an autonomy status for the Palestinians without the participation of the PLO. Baker also found a new form of negotiations by splitting them into different tracks that persuaded Israel and its Arab neighbors to participate in an official peace process.

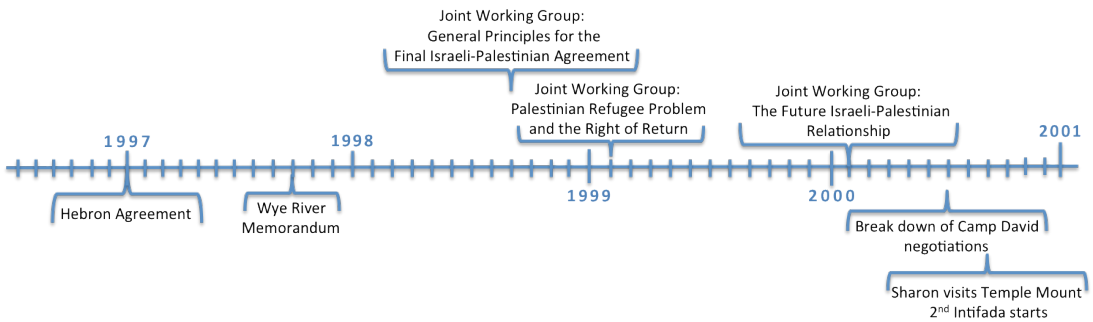
Forming the joint delegation was a lengthy process, marked by the Palestinian effort to obtain more independence as a negotiation partner. The formation of the joint delegation relied on a Jordanian-Palestinian agreement, which stipulated that the Jordanian part of the delegation would hold talks regarding Jordanian issues, while the Palestinian team would handle the Palestinian track. The joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation represented both a



key Palestinian concession to Israeli demands as well as a sort of compromise between the two positions. To meet Israeli demands for not negotiating directly with the PLO, the Palestinian delegation counted only Palestinian representatives from the West Bank and Gaza (no residents of Jerusalem) who were not associated with the PLO (Aly, 1994: 40). To meet Palestinian and Arab demands for making the PLO the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, the Palestinian representatives in the joint delegation would have equal status as their Jordanian colleagues Further, the Palestinian part of the joint delegation was able to establish a group of experts, including Palestinian residents of Jerusalem, which would de facto consult with the PLO (Bentsur, 2001). With the indirect control of the negotiations by the PLO, Israel's condition was only technically fulfilled.

A Three-Tier Process

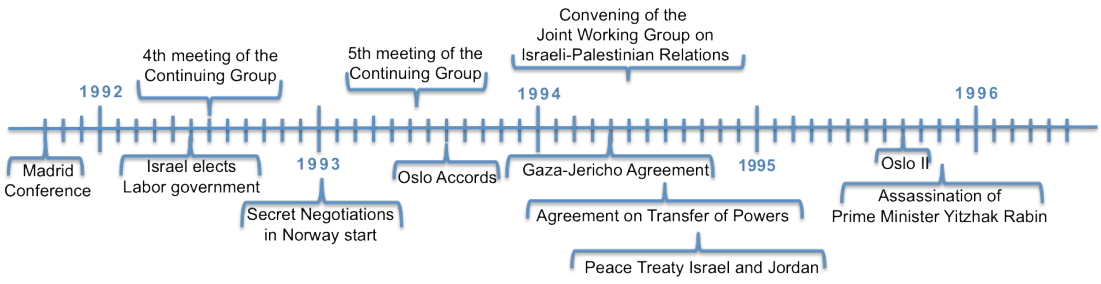
The new form of negotiations within the Madrid framework consisted of a three-tier process. The three-tier format enabled the conflict parties to negotiate in separate yet complementary tracks and thereby disentangled some of the protracted Arab-Israeli conflict issues. The first tier contained the opening Madrid Conference and met Arab demands for an international conference. Next to Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinians, representatives of the European Community, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the UN attended as observers (Aly, 1994).



The second tier contained bilateral negotiations between Israel and Syria, Israel and Lebanon and Israel and the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. The negotiations aimed at achieving peace treaties between Israel and the Arab confrontation states and at reaching an agreement for the establishment of interim self-rule for Palestinian Arabs. The bilateral talks hosted the first-ever public direct talks between Israel and its neighbors, apart from Egypt, and signaled a breakthrough in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a Palestinian delegation was participating in official negotiations with Israel for the first time.

The third tier contained multilateral negotiations, which were to be attended by not only by Israel and its immediate neighbors but also by other Arab countries like Saudi Arabia, the US, Russia, the EC, Canada, Japan, Turkey and others who wished to help resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. The multilateral track aimed at building confidence and at improving social-economic conditions in the Middle East. The negotiations comprised five forums, each focusing on a major regional issue including water supply, environment, arms control, refugees and economic development.

The Madrid framework upheld that negotiations between the Jordanian-Palestinian and the Israeli delegation needed to comply with Security Council Resolution 242 and 338, recognize Israel and respect its security interests, and follow the formula "land for peace". Land referred to the Occupied Territories including East Jerusalem, while peace referred to the full normalization of relations among all the involved parties. The extent of Israeli withdrawal from

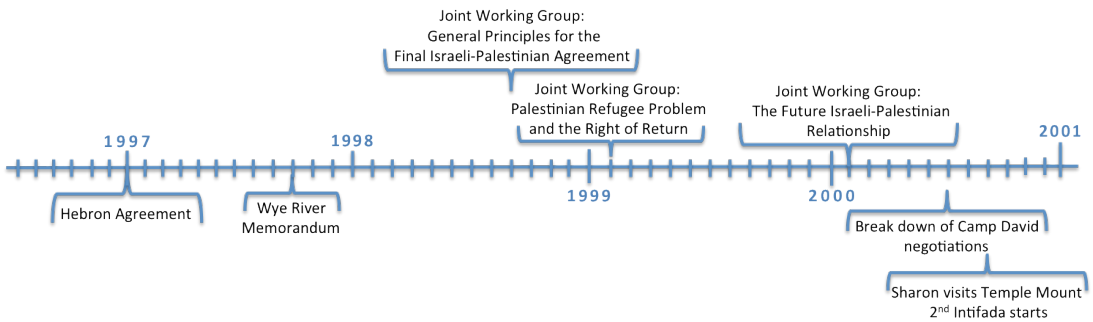


Arab territories would be determined through negotiations. During an overall five-year period an autonomous Palestinian entity should be established and linked with Jordan in one federal or confederate state. The final status of this entity would be determined in renewed negotiations after a three-year interim period of Palestinian self-rule (Eisenberg and Caplan, 1998).

During the first round of bilateral talks, held between 3rd and 4th of November, Palestinian delegates handed their Israeli counterparts a 24-points document as a basis for the official start of their negotiations in December, which Israel rejected.

Israeli delegates refused to participate in the second round of talks in Washington in December, because they disagreed with the stipulations of the Jordanian-Palestinian agreement underlying the joint delegation. Israel refused to hold separate talks with the Palestinian part of the delegation and insisted on negotiating with the joint delegation over both Palestinian and Jordanian tracks. As a result, Palestinians and Jordanians proposed to form a Palestinian team containing two Jordanian representatives and a Jordanian team containing two Palestinian representatives, which Israel finally accepted at the onset of the third negotiation round (Abbas, 1995).

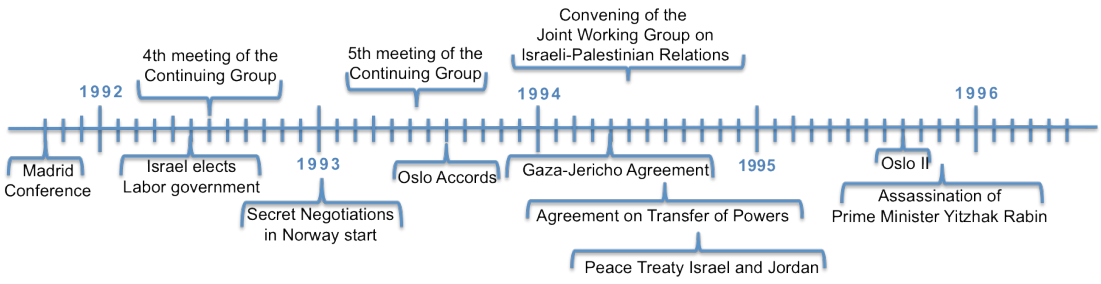
In reaction to continued Israeli settlement activities, Palestinian delegates refused to enter the third round of negotiations in January 1992, until UN Security Council Resolution 726 condemned Israeli procedures. The Palestinian delegation introduced a model for the Palestinian Interim Self-



Governing Authority (PISAG), which would have legislative, executive and judicial powers in all domains except external security. Its legislative assembly, elected by Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories, would be the source of authority. Following the Palestinian proposal, the Israeli side came under great US pressure to offer concrete propositions on their part for the parameters of Palestinian self-rule (Baker, 1992).

During the fourth negotiation round on February 24, Israeli delegates presented a draft document, containing ideas for peaceful coexistence during the Interim period, while the Palestinian delegation presented an expanded outline of the PISAG, containing concepts, preliminary measures and election modalities. The Israelis tried to avoid the issue of elections, speaking instead of the delegation of administrative powers from Israel to the Palestinians in administration of justice, administrative personnel matters, agriculture, education and culture, budget and taxation, health, industry, commerce and tourism, Labor and social welfare, local police, local transportation and communications, municipal affairs, and religious affairs. The content of the two documents demonstrated how far apart the positions on either side were at that time.

During the fifth negotiation round between April 27 and 30, the Palestinian delegation wrote off the Israeli proposition to hold municipal elections in five West Bank cities as a delaying tactic and an attempt to circumvent a comprehensive interim phase agreement (Mansour, 1993).



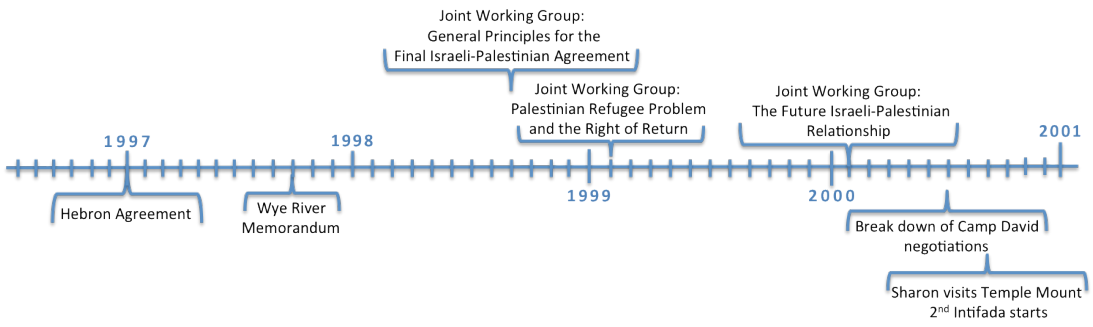
After five rounds of futile discussions between the Jordanian-Palestinian and the Israeli delegation within the framework of the official peace process, the Continuing Group convened again for consultative meetings.

Reflections

The bilateral talks between the Palestinian and the Israeli delegations were confronted with difficulties from the start. For one, the parties lacked commitment to the negotiation process because they did not participate out of motivation to solve their conflict but because both parties had too much to lose from declining the US invitation. The way parties were pressured to attend the peace conference prevented them to explore tentative options for bridging the gap between their fundamental differences (Kelman, 1992).

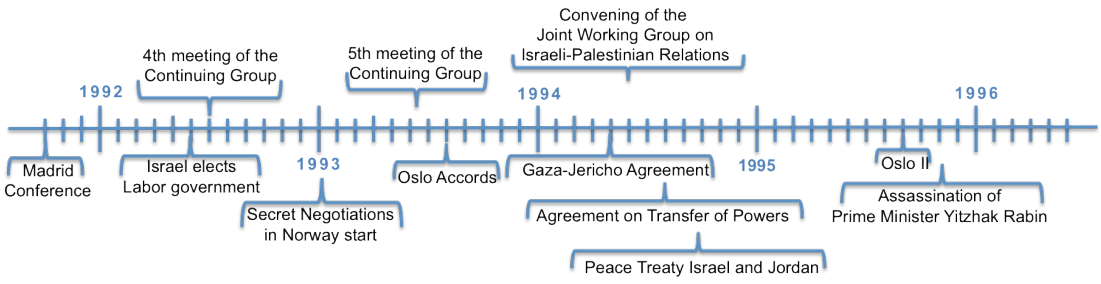
The parties were not negotiating on an equal footing. First, the appointment of Palestinian delegates was constrained by the Israeli refusal to negotiate with representatives of the PLO or Palestinians living in Jerusalem.

Second, Israelis and Palestinians did not depart from the same premises nor did they negotiate for a congruent objective. The Palestinians aimed at negotiating the basis for a Palestinian state on the grounds of the 1947 UN Partition Resolution 181. Further, Palestinians wanted Jerusalem to become the capital of a future Palestinian state as an expression of the Palestinian right to self-determination. For Israelis, the UN partition plan had become outmoded. Instead of engaging in negotiations of the parameters for a Palestinian state, the



Israeli delegation aimed at determining the guidelines for a Palestinian autonomy status. Jerusalem did not appear on the negotiation agenda of the Israeli delegation, as it was perceived to be the eternal capital of Israel. Third, the ambiguous reference to Resolution 242 made by the US during the preparation phase of the peace process obstructed the official talks. The letter of invitation to the Peace Conference stated that only the final status of the Palestinian territories would be subject to the Resolution 242 stipulation for Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories. The US letter of assurance to the Palestinians issued the same day as the invitation, failed to provide that kind of specification but gave indications that the Resolution would guide all the stages of the negotiations. This ambiguity was constructive to convene the Madrid Conference, as everybody felt their interests to be met, but very obstructive to engage in real negotiations, as Israelis and Palestinians felt that they were not talking to each other on the same ground at all (Said Aly, 1994).

With regard to the national identity perception of the two conflict parties, the start of the official negotiations demonstrated, that the political elites on each side held on to the status quo. Refusal to accept the PLO as a negotiation partner reflected Israeli refusal to acknowledge Palestinian national existence. Palestinian insistence on departing from territorial distribution of the 1947 partition plan as well as Israeli refusal to engage in negotiating parameters of a two-state solution reflected, that national identity perception of either side had not expanded towards accepting new parameters with regard to territorial ownership.

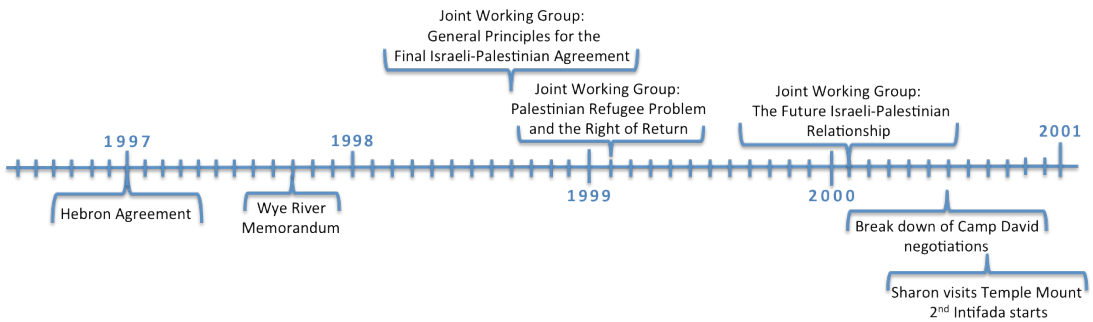


Intermediary Consultation Meetings of the Continuing Group

The start of the official talks introduced new factors that needed to be considered for the structuring of further workshops. To discuss these factors the third party convened three consultation meetings with subgroups of the Continuing Workshop in May 1992 (Kelman and Rouhana, 1994).

The discussions of the consultation meetings circulated around how the workshop format needed to respond to the fact that the discussions were no longer an instrument of pre-negotiation. Some participants feared the public might construe the meetings as a parallel process to the official meetings and that this might harm the workshop and its participants. Four out of the six Palestinian participants had become part of the official process either as members of the negotiation team or as consultants thereof (some of the Israeli participants would become involved in the negotiation team after the election of the Rabin government in June 1992). It thus became necessary to consider whether their participation in the official negotiations would overlap in a problematic way with their participation in the Continuing Workshop.

After taking all the different aspects into consideration, the participants decided together with the third party that it was necessary to convene a forth Continuing Workshop at the end of July 1992.



Fourth Meeting of the Continuing Workshop in July 1992

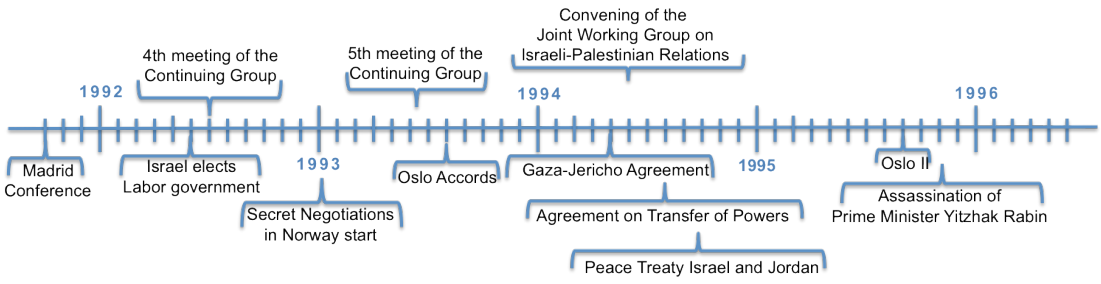
Shortly after a new Labor government was elected in Israel on June 23, 1992, the Continuing Group convened their fourth meeting. The discussions focused on the new reality, which the Peace Process and the Israeli election had introduced, as well as on the new role of the participants who were engaged in the official process. The group was busy finding out whether and how these participants would manage to be part of a formal *and* an informal peace initiative at the same time. An Israeli as well as a Palestinian group member felt that they could not fulfill both roles and decided not to take part in the fourth meeting. Other participants involved in the formal process found the two engagements to be combinable.

The third party asked a Palestinian group member who was part of the official delegation how the participant viewed that double role with regard to eventual future meetings of the group.

The Palestinian participant answered that a continued activity would depend on what function the group would choose to take on in the light of new developments. The participant saw a variety of possible future functions for the group; some of them would allow for simultaneous formal and informal engagements, while others would not.

The third party asked whether the participant could think of concrete criteria for the function of the workshops that would allow for a double role of group members.

The Palestinian participant took the view that it would be necessary to establish equilibrium between group members who were official delegates of

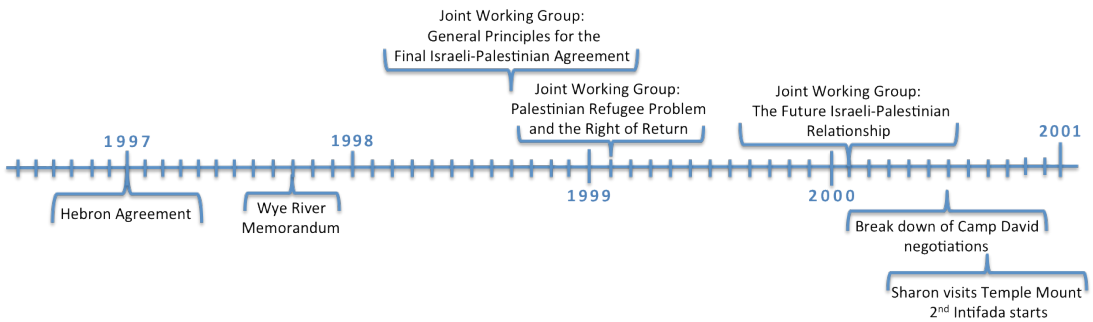


the negotiation teams and members who were not, but who were closely in touch with the public on each side.

The third party agreed to that thought but saw difficulties of upholding the continuous character of the existing group with four out of six Palestinians being engaged in the formal endeavor while a lot less of the Israeli group members were involved. A third party member suggested that the Israeli participants could think about how they could establish a close relationship to their public and to those engaged in the official talks, in order to balance the situation.

Some of the Israeli participants voiced concerns about their ability to do that. One of them then found that there should be more informal groups like their own. The participant envisioned establishing up to a hundred Track II groups each counting 10 to 12 influential members of the respective communities that would meet on a monthly basis. The participant showed motivation to raise funds for such a compound of informal groups, as an effort of that scope could a have multiplied impact and decisively influence decision-making processes.

The third party considered that the future of their effort would have to respond to the nature of the peace process. It was necessary to look at possible future scenarios in order to decide what form of informal initiatives would complement the general peace process in an efficient manner. For this purpose the third party introduced the following three possible scenarios for official negotiations and how the continuing group could respond to them:



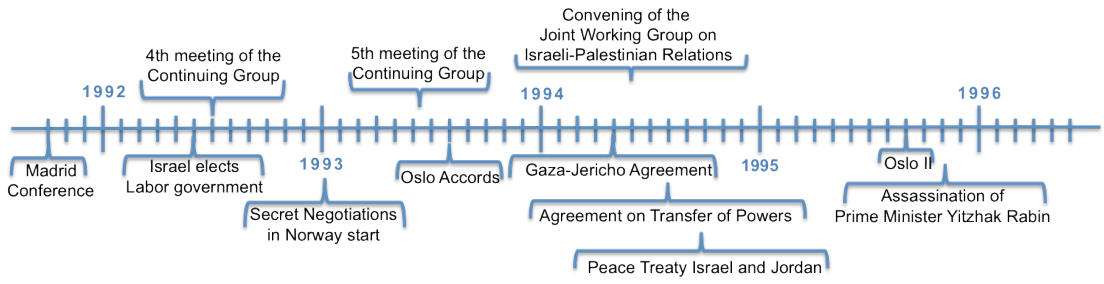
1) if the negotiations had a difficult start, were to stagnate or even fail completely, the continuing group would remain with their original workshop format of discussing how to overcome obstacles to engaging in negotiations;
2) if the official process was to be difficult and prolonged, the group could look at problems and develop alternative solutions through creative problem solving, which could not be done within the framework of official talks;
3) if the official negotiation process was to be smooth and successful, the continuing group could engage in peace-building activity;

For the time being the third party suggested to keep the group's focus on tackling issues that blocked official talks, or on elaborating peace-building measures.

* * *

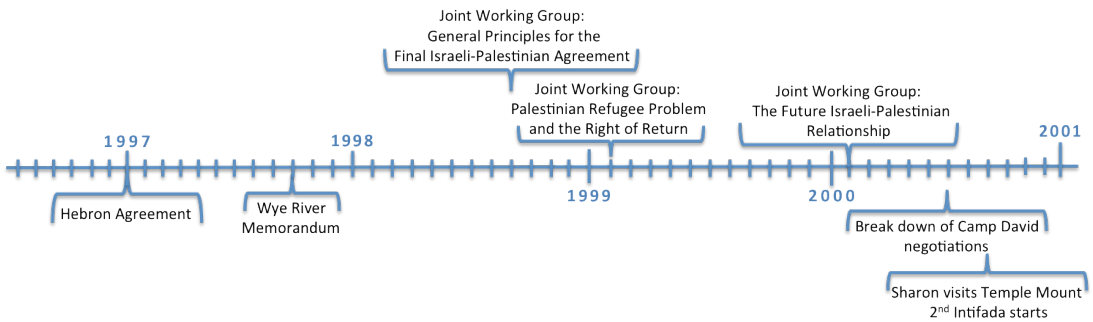
In a next session, the group addressed as one of the most prominent issues the Palestinian interim self-government, which had been the primary item on the official agenda. To start the discussion, some Palestinian participants gave an outline of how the Palestinian interim self-government had been presented and discussed at the official negotiations:

4) in terms of territory, the interim self-government would comprise the land that was occupied during the 1967 war, including East Jerusalem;



5) in terms of authority, the interim self-government needed to be established through elections voted for by Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories and by no other way, the elected authority should extend to the use of land and roads, as well as to economic, social and religious affairs;
6) in terms of jurisdiction, the interim self-government was intended to become the only authority in charge as it was not acceptable nor implemental to have two sets of rules applying to the same piece of land;
7) in terms of durability, the interim self-government should – as its name implies – be a transitional phase in terms of the guidelines provided by the UN Resolution 242, and be in place only until all Israeli troops had been able to withdraw from the land occupied since 1967 according to the principles of the land for peace formula.

Other Palestinian group members added that Palestinians needed a neutral body to monitor a free and democratic election. The presence of such a body should grant freedom of political expression and organization as well as free movement. Israeli authorities should no longer hinder Palestinians in their free movement, arrest them for their political views, and should release political prisoners. Once elections had been run successfully, the Palestinian community would need arrangements that would enable the elected body to



enforce law and order, to maintain security, and to strengthen their police force with regard to handling problems with settlers and the Israeli army.

Israeli participants, then, asked whether Israeli security forces were to be deployed on the east or the west side of the Green Line.

Palestinian group members replied that they respected Israeli security concerns with regard to that and would leave the decision up to them. They added that this was also the case in terms of legislation. According to the US stand on the issue, the Palestinian interim self-government should only have legislation on certain issues. The Palestinian participants were ready to limit their legislation in cases where Israeli security responsibilities would be contradicted as long as the basis of Palestinian legislative authority was not jeopardized.

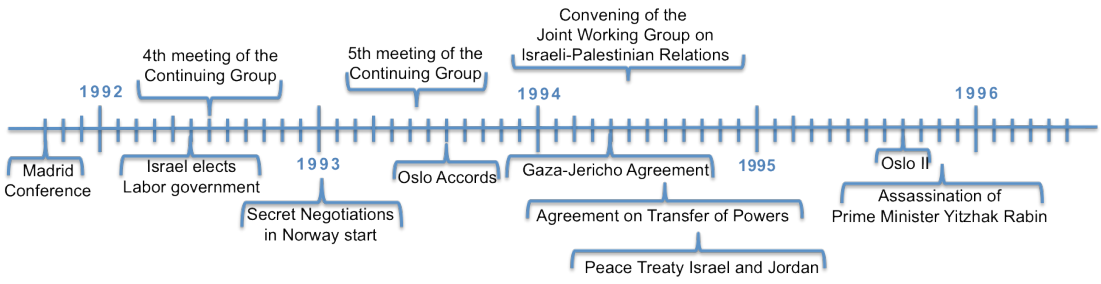
A third party member asked who would decide about granting entrance to passengers to the West Bank during the interim period.

Palestinian participants answered that the right to passage would be extended to include people that did not have the right to pass the borders so far.

Israeli group members asked how the passage of bridges in those areas would be regulated.

Palestinian participants answered that they should be under joint control and that the fees for passage should be the same for everyone and shared equally between the Palestinian and Israeli authorities.

Israeli participants then inquired how their Palestinian colleagues felt about the prospect of agreeing to an interim arrangement and whether they would want to avoid it if they had the possibility.



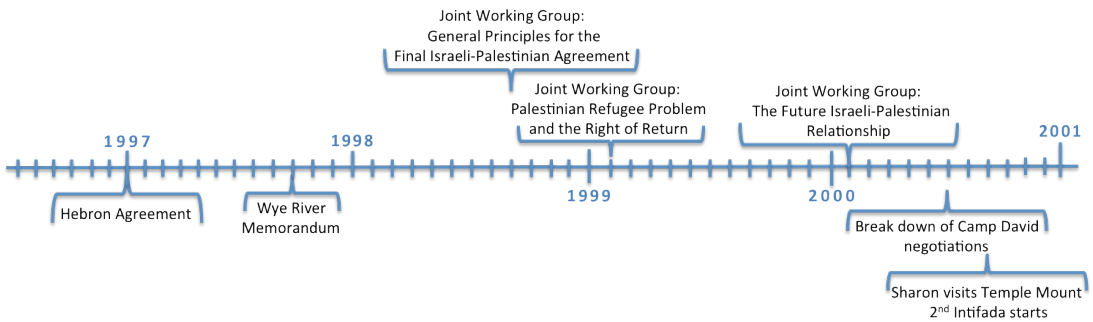
Palestinian group members affirmed that they disliked the proposed interim arrangement because they found it flawed. They criticized that Palestinians living outside the West Bank and Gaza had not been allowed to participate in the official negotiations.

The third party reminded the group that it was interesting to talk about the realities of the formal negotiations, but that the purpose of the continuing group was to engage in a discussion that was free of official constraints. They motivated the group to forget about official limitations and try to think freely again about ways for solving current problems that would be satisfactory to the people in the room and then see how these ideas could be fitted into the larger process.

In response to that statement Palestinian participants said that the objective would be to find a way for Palestinians to live in dignity and freedom. This would allow both Palestinian and Israeli to grow and thrive. The question was how to find a formula that would respond to their needs and hopes and provide a multi-group arrangement allowing both sides to grow culturally and economically on a basis of equality while recognizing their respective national objectives.

Israeli participants said that it looked as if the interim period was imposed on the Palestinians and asked whether they personally disliked the idea of it.

Palestinian group members replied that an interim period was necessary. What they disliked was that the negotiations on it started without any vision of

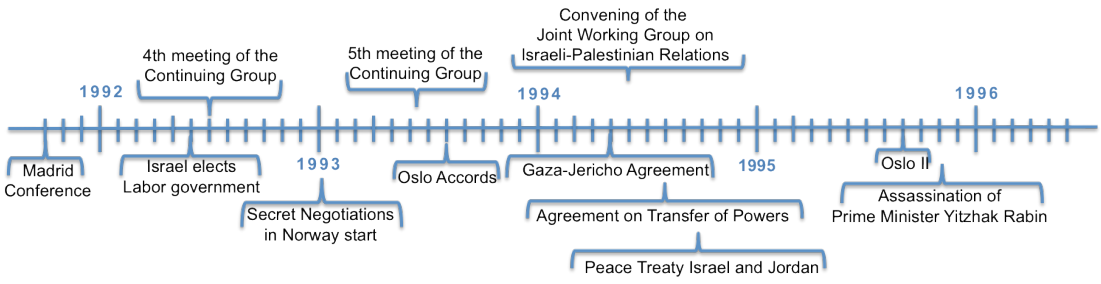


the final step. They explained that a clear picture of the final status of a future Palestinian state would reassure Palestinians, that interim arrangements represented a step along the way and would make it much easier for them to negotiate measures for a transitional period.

Some Israeli participants replied that the interim period should be seen as a way to change perceptions of the two publics and bridge the gap between their positions. Palestinians should not insist on getting confirmation from the Israelis on the final status of the Palestinian future polity right now. According to the Israeli participants, the fact that the Israeli government saw the state's security endangered by making concessions to the Palestinians now, did not rule out that a change in position would become possible, once Palestinians managed to work out an efficient governmental structure. With such developments in place, the Israeli public would also become ready to accept a negotiated solution that would respond to Palestinian aspirations.

Other Israeli group members added that the Israelis needed an interim period, probably more than the Palestinians did, as an educational phase. Also, the participants found it necessary for both parties to have the opportunity to sort out a number of issues during that time and thereby preparing the ground for a solution that would last.

Palestinian participants disagreed with certain aspects of that view. What made them feel uncomfortable was its experimental nature that allowed Israelis to change their mind if the Palestinian community would not behave according to prescribed parameters.



Israeli group members said that they had to accept the fact of still being in a war-like situation.

Palestinian participants countered that the Israelis had the possibility to reverse that.

Israeli participants asked what would happen if the Palestinians failed to respond to the agreed upon requirements.

Palestinian participants replied that in that case they would again have to sit together and find new solutions.

Israeli participants then asked what would happen if the Israelis failed to comply with agreed requirements.

Palestinian participants answered that the Israelis should not accept any arrangement that might lead to the destruction of Israel.

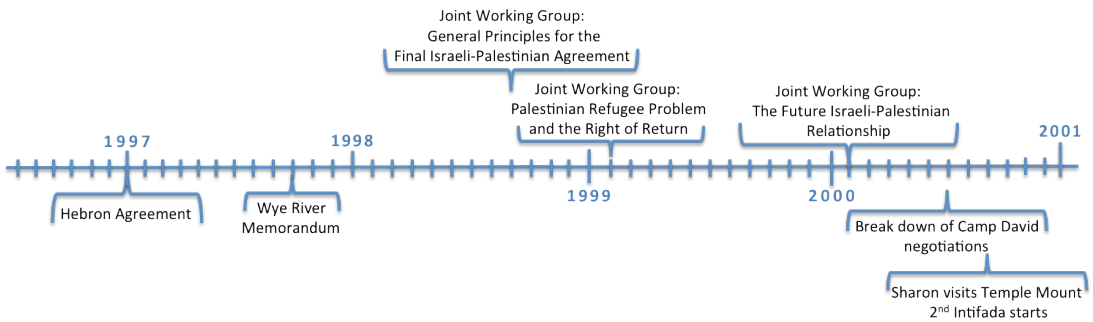
Israeli group members responded they accepted only what would allow them to live in peace.

Palestinian participants countered that the same was true for them.

Israeli participants closed the conversation by saying that it was still not sure whether that was feasible.

* * *

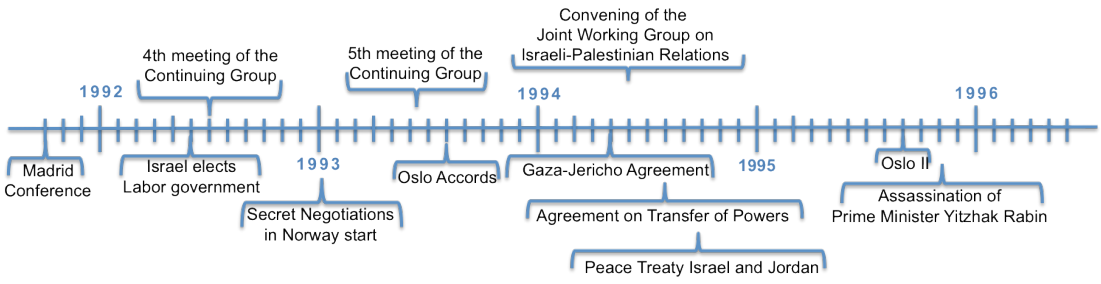
During the final session of the fourth meeting of the Continuing Workshop, the group and the third party discussed in depth whether or not it was possible for them to meet again and what format future meetings could



take. They agreed that it was impossible to uphold the continuity of the group, as four out of six Palestinians were too heavily involved in the official process. Even if the current group members felt that the two efforts were compatible on political terms, their time-schedules would probably not allow them to commit to further meetings. The group generally agreed to keep all options open for them to meet again after future developments of the official peace process would have become clear and decided to develop a meaningful format and group composition at that point in time. The third party asked the group to decide about new possibilities on their own and not to wait for an initiative from them. The third party made it clear that the mandate for new workshop meetings should come from the participants.

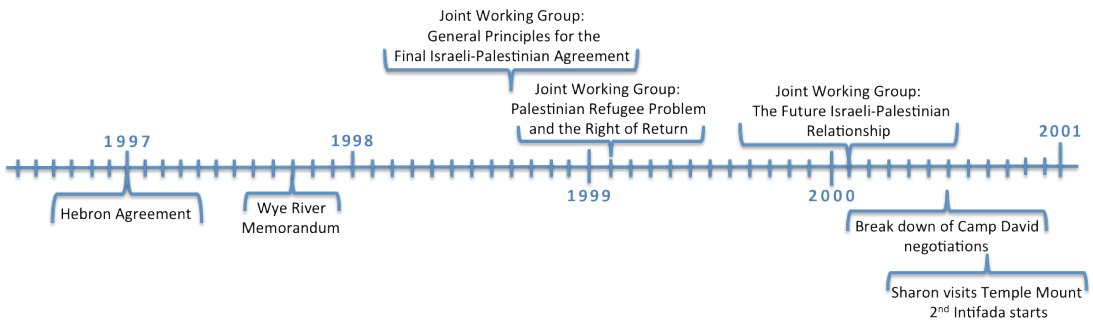
The third party recaptured that the group had worked very well during the four meetings. The fact that they had been able to continue to meet and engage in fruitful discussions during the height of the Gulf Crisis and alongside official negotiations was found to be an achievement by itself. They reminded the participants that they had met the aim of the Continuing Workshop. Its aim was not to produce a publishable written agreement, but to achieve an exchange of views between knowledgeable and influential people from each conflict party that would allow them to develop new ideas for possible solutions through joint analytical discussions. Through that the each party had managed to reach an understanding of the other's priorities, needs, fears, and constraints.

During the first meeting the group made a great effort of trying to understand what motivated each side's acts and statements. During the second meeting when the dehumanizing events of the Gulf War had led to enormous



distrust between the two parties and negotiations seemed almost impossible, the group was able to create a sense of possibility and work out a lot of ways on how to influence the public opinion of their communities. By the time of the third meeting, the group had become ready to really engage in joint thinking. They were able to analyze specific problems and formulate ideas to solve them that were acceptable to both conflict parties. Although the group decided not to publish the formulations as a product of the workshop, participants did use the newly gained ideas in their writings and political speeches. More than that, participants confirmed that they were able to use their new insight in an effective manner every day by formulating certain issues in a different way that would eventually transform the barriers on either side.

An Israeli group member described the situation by quoting a statement from Churchill saying that this was not the end, not the beginning of the end, but the end of the beginning. The participant opted to leave the options for future meetings open by all means as the group had reached a stage where their efforts could achieve a lot of impact. The participant felt that over the course of the years, rapprochement and openness in asking and answering questions had grown steadily from one meeting to the next among the members of the group. In addition to those positive developments the Israeli group member pointed out that it was remarkable that so many participants had become involved in the official process in one way or another, which reflected a very skilful choosing of participants by the third party. Further, the participant found it interesting, that during the first couple of meetings the group debated the fact that the



Israeli participants did not represent their political mainstream and efforts were made to take a member of the Likud party into the continuing group, and that over a short period of time political realities had changed to such an extent that the Israeli group members had indeed become mainstream representatives.

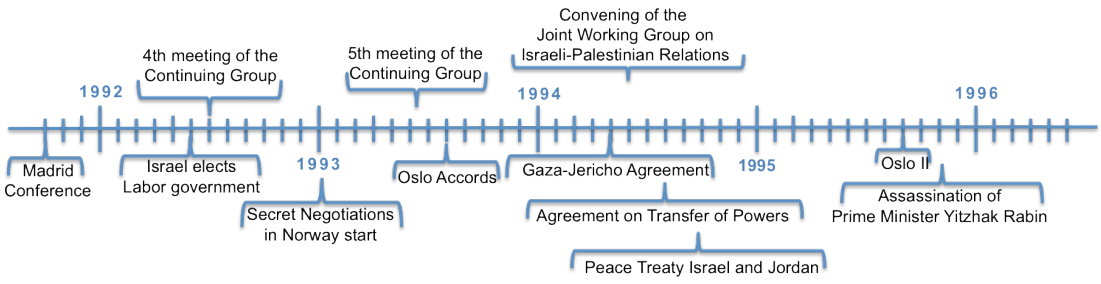
A Palestinian participant suggested that the group should remain in contact for arranging a meeting after the next round of official talks in which the new developments could be discussed and a future format for the workshop group could be developed.

The third party welcomed that proposition and asked the participants to take the responsibility of forming a team on each side. The third party could then propose a new agenda from which the participants could choose possible discussion topics.

Reflections

Remarkably, the continuing group was able to address the salient issue, astonishingly through the remarks of the Israeli party, that the parameters of the officially proposed Palestinian interim self-rule had been imposed on the Palestinian community. This shows how the informal nature of dialogue groups and the established discussion culture of continual meetings allowed the approach of conflict issues that were difficult to tackle in an official setting.

Thereby, one of the realities that had acted as a barrier during the official talks surfaced during the fifth workshop. The parties pointed out that there had been a lack of participation, or of the possibility for participation, on



the Palestinian side with regard to the preparatory stage of the official negotiations and the setting of parameters for an interim phase.

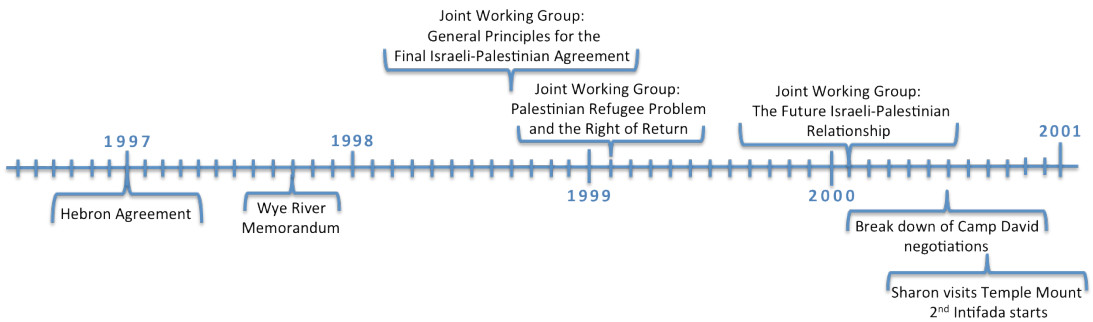
Furthermore, it became clear that the Palestinian community lacked official reassurance from the Israeli side about the finality of the future Palestinian polity. The informal discussion format allowed the Israeli party to explain that their government was unable to confirm how a final solution would look like because it equaled a threat to the existence of their state. They assured their Palestinian colleagues that this inability did not mean that the Palestinian vision of their future polity was unattainable.

In return Palestinian participants were able to reassure Israeli group members that they understood the centrality of safeguarding the existence of the Israeli state and their focus on security. Thereby they addressed another major issue that acted as a barrier during the official talks.

Quintessentially, both parties were able to say to each other that their shared interest was to build the groundwork that allowed both of them to live in peace and security. Unlike the delegations of the official negotiation process, workshop participants were able to find common ground, on the basis of which possible parameters of their future relationship could be explored.

Fifth Meeting of the Continuing Workshop in 1993

Due to the developments of the official peace process, three members of the Palestinian team were no longer able to attend the meetings. The third party was able to recruit three new Palestinian participants for the fifth meeting of the



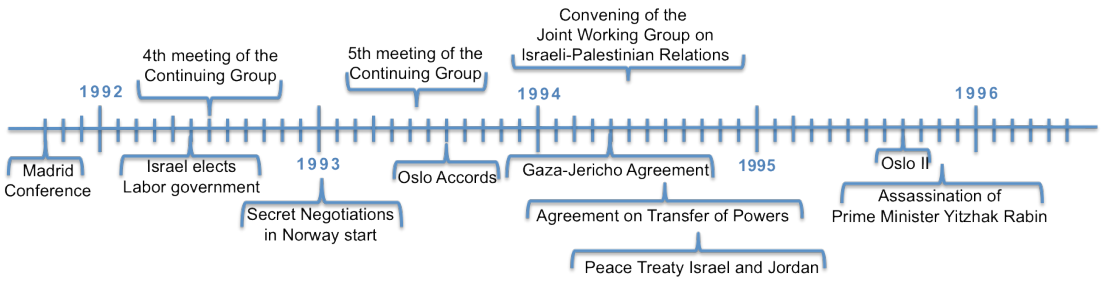
Continuing Workshop. The new situation meant for existing group members to integrate the new arrivals. The group reflected on the future of the Continuing Workshop and although they could not decide on how to proceed in light of the new situation they did not decide to discontinue the meetings.

Secret Negotiations

After the Israeli elections in June 1992, the Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg authorized his deputy, Jan Egeland, to contact the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister, Yossi Beilin, with the suggestion to arrange a meeting with high-ranking representatives of the PLO. For Beilin such a meeting was not possible, as Israeli law still prohibited contact with the PLO. Beilin referred Egeland to his friends and colleagues Yair Hirschfeld and Ron Pundak. Both of them were historians and had worked with Beilin in his research group called Economic Cooperation Foundation. The small think-tank was dedicated to finding ways to advance peace through direct contact with Palestinians (Egeland, 1999).

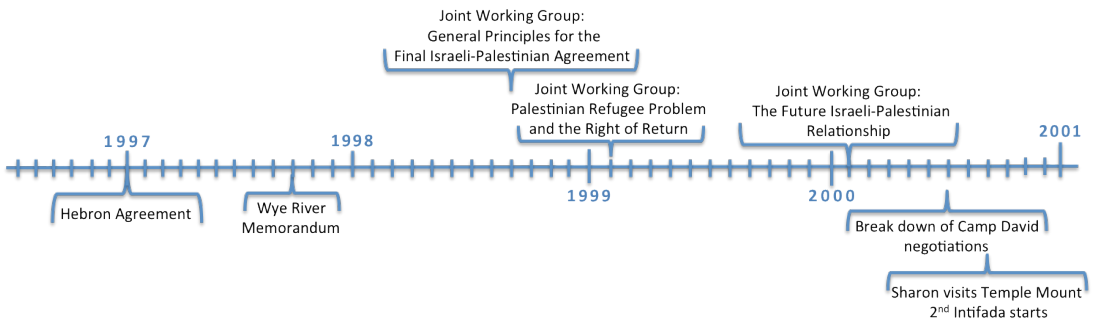
To facilitate further contacts, Egeland was helped by his friend Terje Rod Larson, a sociologist and the director of the Norwegian Institute for Applied Social Sciences in Oslo called FAFO, which had been conducting a field study on living conditions in the Occupied Territories, as well as by Mona Juul, Larson's wife, who worked as Egeland's assistant.

Before attending a university seminar in London, Hirschfeld had consulted Hanan Ashrawi, the spokeswomen of the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid Conference, about further possibilities to enhance Israeli-



Palestinian contacts. Ashrawi offered to speak to Ahmed Qurei, known as Abu Ala, whom she believed to be interested in the link between peace and economic development and coordinated the Palestinian participation in the multilateral talks held in London at that time. Larson happened to be based in London as well and was instrumental in convincing Hirschfeld to meet with Abu Ala. The two agreed to an exploratory meeting in Norway (Corbin, 1994).

The first brainstorming session between Hirschfeld, Pundak, Qurei, Hassan Asfur, a political advisor to the PLO in Tunis, and Maher El Kurd, a Palestinian economist, took place on January 21, 1993 in Borregaard, Norway. The meeting occurred only two days after the Israeli Knesset abrogated the law forbidding contact with the PLO. The five men were supported by Egeland, Larsen, and Juul, but were left alone to discuss their issues. The talks went well. Both sides shared the view that the talks should not just be an academic meeting but should serve the aim of developing ideas on how to reach agreement and thereby working towards a "Declaration of Principles". Among the concrete proposals shared between the two sides, was Abu Ala's statement that the peace process would have to start with the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Occupied Territories and should occur first in Gaza. The coastal strip would be a testing ground for working out the mechanisms of returning control to the Palestinians. The PLO representative knew that this concept was attractive to the Israelis and thereby showed his commitment to the informal exercise. The group decided to meet again three weeks later. In the meantime

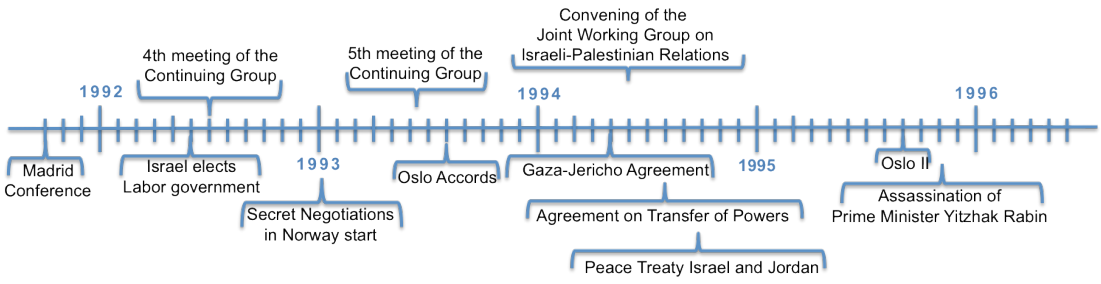


both sides consulted with their superiors and were advised to continue without any further official involvement.

During the next session on February 12, Abu Ala, Asfur, and El Kurd presented a plan containing terms of reference for an interim agreement on autonomy for the Occupied Territories and what jurisdiction the Palestinians would have during the interim period. The plan called for implementation of a final accord settling the status of the disputed land and set aims for negotiations to reach that aim. Further, the plan contained references to Jerusalem and included a massive international aid effort: a Marshall Plan for Gaza.

The Israeli team presented a paper, echoing the concept of Gaza First and containing ideas about economic cooperation. Most importantly, Hirschfeld and Pundak introduced the idea of "graduality", a staged withdrawal of Israeli forces and gradual establishment of an interim autonomous regime first in Gaza and then in other parts of the Occupied Territories. Hirschfeld suggested transferring one authority after another, month by month. Thereby, matters like health, education and cultural affairs could be handed over one by one. The February meeting ended on a high note. The two groups managed to synthesize their two proposals into one Declaration of Principles (Pundak, 2002).

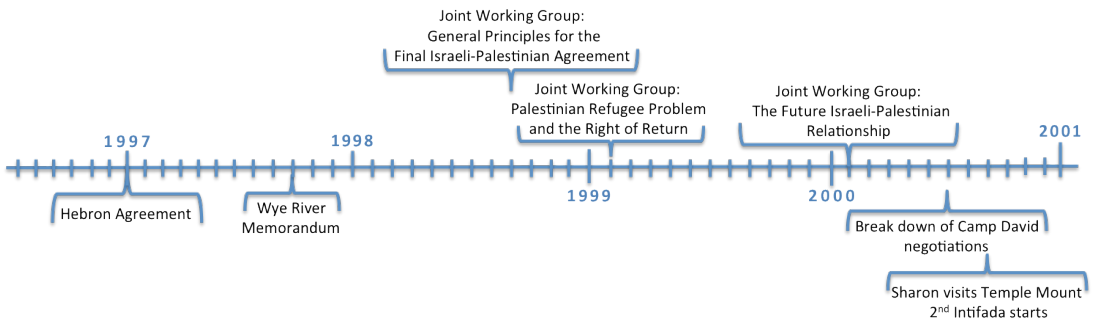
When Beilin was informed about the idea of gradualism he was positively surprised. The principle of gradualism allowed for a halt to the process or a reversing of it, if anything should go wrong. This met with the Israeli official objective and would calm security concerns that had blocked the peace process. The even bigger surprise was that the Palestinian leadership



accepted the prospect of proceeding gradually. Beilin informed Foreign Minister Shimon Peres about the draft document and the latter informed Rabin. Although they were both in favor of the development, no further involvement of the Israeli government occurred (Beilin, 1999).

The group continued to meet. In April, Abu Ala introduced – on behalf of Arafat – the idea that the Israelis should withdraw from Gaza and Jericho simultaneously and pushed for increased official involvement from the Israelis. After some phone conversations with the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, Beilin was ready to consider further involvement in the secret channel if Abu Ala were able to prove that Arafat was really behind him and that he could deliver what he promised. At the next two rounds of the official bilateral talks Abu Ala, who was still chairing the Palestinian steering committee, was able to prove his influence This ultimately let Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to send Uri Savir, the Director-General of Israel's Foreign Ministry, in May and Joel Singer, a former negotiator of the Camp David Accords, in June to join the team. Involvement of the senior officials on both sides turned the informal Norwegian track into an official secret channel of negotiations between the PLO and the government of Israel.

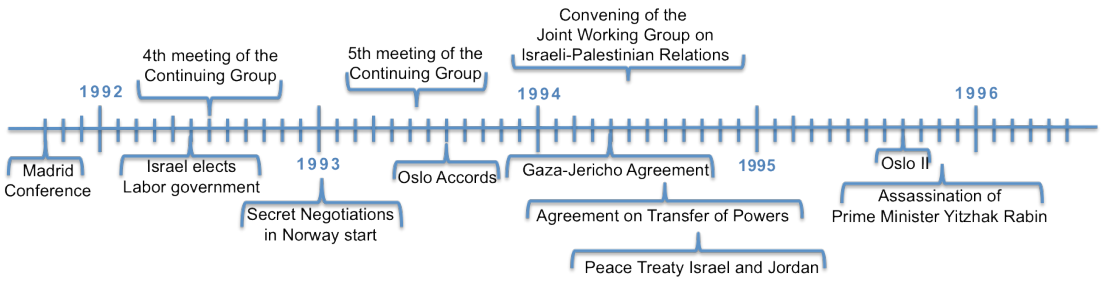
By July, new points were added to the discussion, points that clearly showed the involvement of each side's political leadership. As a result the talks became more comprehensive but also more strenuous. First, the Israeli representatives introduced a new document that altered the previously agreed upon Declaration of Principles considerably, which angered the Palestinians.



Nevertheless, the group managed to alter the paper and include Palestinian demands. In the end only five points remained to be resolved: the inclusion of UN Resolutions 242 and 338, permanent status negotiations, the Gaza/Jericho First approach, elections in Jerusalem, and the fate of Palestinians displaced during the 1967 war.

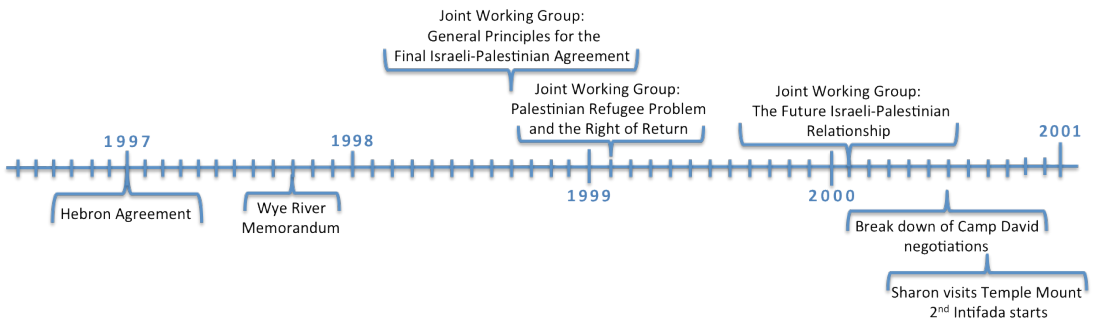
At the next meeting the Palestinians presented a completely changed proposal that shocked the Israelis. The proposal employed "Palestine Liberation Organization" wherever "Palestinian" had been used before. It further stipulated that the Palestinians should have control over the passage between Gaza and Jericho and proposed that this passage should be a wide linking road belonging to Palestinian territory. When the Israelis refused to consider the new document, the Palestinians offered to go back to the original Declaration of Principles. The Israelis, however, insisted on continuing with the document they had been working on to resolve the five outstanding points. After some shuttle diplomacy between the Norwegian Foreign Minister and the leaderships in Israel and Tunis to foster trust in the endeavor on both sides, the group met again.

Despite diplomatic efforts, the Palestinian document changed only to exclude East Jerusalem and the road between Gaza and Jericho of the blueprint for interim arrangements, but did not pick up on the points that had been discussed on the basis of the Israeli document. The group then decided to take both of the two new documents and try to combine them by going through them word by word in order to find a compromise. This plan proved to be unfeasible, as sixteen points of the twenty-five under discussion remained



unresolved, and the talks faced a serious crisis. Abu Ala announced his resignation. Savir countered that move by stating that this proved how the PLO would never seize the opportunity to make real peace, and that they cared more about themselves than about the Palestinian people, who would be forced to continue living in hardship just because of sixteen open points in a close agreement. Hirschfeld backed Savir's statement by saying that he felt misled by the PLO, that the Israeli representatives would have to tell their leadership that the gap between the two could never be bridged, and that this would slam the door on finding a solution to the conflict for generations to come (Corbin, 1994).

The situation was reversed, when Savir had the idea of splitting the sixteen open points into two packages of eight. Each side should choose eight points on which they and their political community were flexible. In a next step, each team should convince their leaderships to compromise on those points and make a concession to the other side, which should encourage a reciprocal concession. He suggested that the Israeli team should focus on security issues, while the Palestinians should concentrate on the Gaza/Jericho First deal. In addition, Savir and Singer had prepared an agreement stating that Israel would formally recognize the PLO as the official representative of the Palestinian people, while in return Yasser Arafat's organization would recognize Israel's right to exist and renounce violence. After some "go-between" action of Larsen, Savir and Abu Ala talked for two hours. They

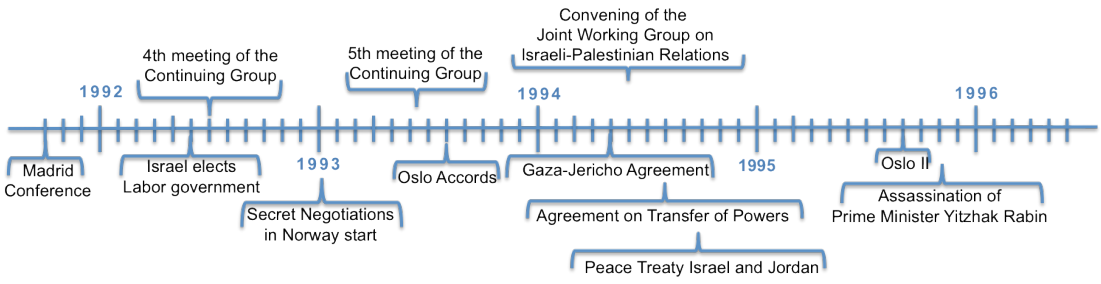


agreed on going ahead with the two documents and work towards obtaining confirmation from their leaderships (Savir, 1999).

At their next meeting on August 13, the group managed to close all open points except for the security aspects of the Gaza/Jericho First approach. When Abu Ala failed to receive the necessary concessions on the outstanding issues from Arafat, the Israeli Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, closed the final gap. Peres was supposed to pay an official visit to Scandinavia on August 17 and meet with Johan Jorgen Holst, his Norwegian counterpart, in Stockholm. Holst, as the representative of the Israeli party, discussed over the phone with the Palestinian party in Tunis the last outstanding points and managed to hammer out an agreement that satisfied both of them. Each side held out for its most crucial concerns, the Israelis for the security of their people and the PLO for the Gaza/Jericho First agreement as a first step along the road to self-government in the Occupied Territories (Egeland, 1999).

Declaration of Principles

The final agreement contained concrete steps for a Palestinian self-governing structure with the following parameters: The Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho would be transferred to the authority of a Palestinian self-government that would have more powers than an autonomous or self-ruled entity. Free movement would be granted between the two parts of the Gaza-Jericho area. An autonomy status would apply to the rest of the West Bank, while the status of Jerusalem would remain unchanged. For the administration of Gaza-Jericho a council would be appointed. To govern the

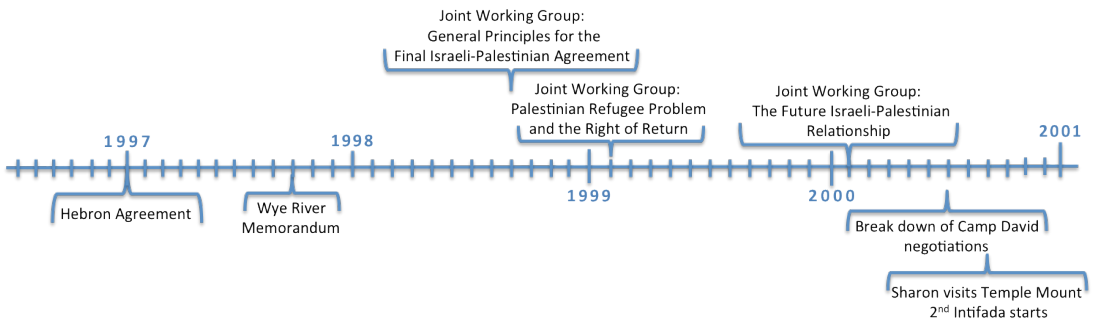


rest of the West Bank the local population would elect an administrative authority. On August 20, 1993, Peres – celebrating his seventieth birthday on that day – witnessed Abu Ala and Savir sign the historic agreement entitled "Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements" (Savir, 1999).

Two weeks later, on September 9, the Letters of Mutual Recognition were exchanged between Arafat and Rabin containing the points hammered out by Savir and Ala transforming the two parties from enemies to neighbors. Arafat's letter confirmed the PLO commitment to the recognition of the state of Israel, to the acceptance of UN Resolutions 242 and 338, and to the peaceful resolution of the conflict and all outstanding issues relating to permanent status through negotiations. Rabin's responding letter confirmed that the Israeli government had decided to recognize the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and commence negotiations with the PLO within the Middle East peace process (Buchanan, 2000).

On September 13, the Declaration of Principles was officially sealed with Yassir Arafat signing for the PLO and Shimon Peres signing for the State of Israel in Washington. The Declaration was designed as a preamble defining the principles of Palestinian self-government in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and providing a framework for further negotiations, and did not claim to be a final settlement of the conflict.

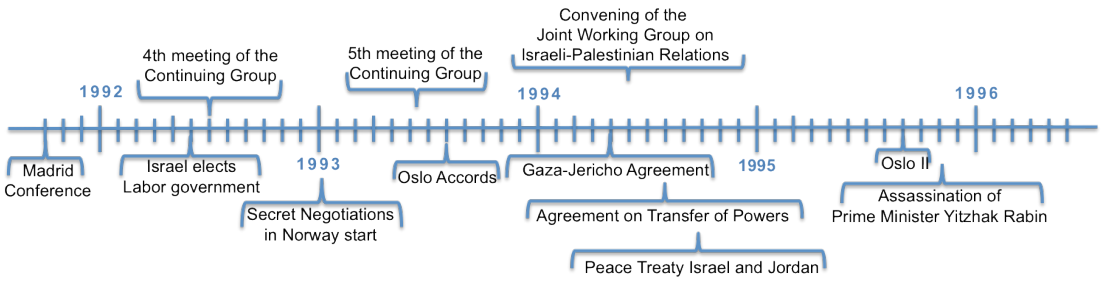
As stated in Article I, the primary aim of the Declaration was the establishment of a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority – the



Council – for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for a transitional period of not more than five years and leading to a permanent settlement based on UN Security Council Resolution 242 and 338. More concretely, the Declaration of principles laid out a central timetable for the transitional period, which was to begin with the withdrawal of the Israeli Military (IDF) from the Gaza Strip and Jericho in the West Bank. In the wake of the IDF withdrawal, arrangements were to be made for the transfer of authority to the Palestinian residents of these zones in the areas of education and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation, and tourism.

Further, the Declaration of Principles stated that members of the Council were to be selected through general elections and the Council's jurisdiction would cover the West Bank and Gaza Strip territory, except for issues that would be decided during the Permanent Status negotiations. The structure, makeup and authority of the Council were, however, not made explicit in the Declaration of Principles. Instead, these issues were to form the substance of an interim agreement to be negotiated subsequently by Palestinian and Israeli delegations.

In order to guarantee public order and internal security, the Declaration of Principles recognized that the Council would be called upon to establish and supervise a Palestinian police force. In reality, the organization and training of this force had already begun informally even before the agreement was signed. Nevertheless, Israel was to retain responsibility for defending against external threats and for the overall security of Israelis living in the Occupied Territories.



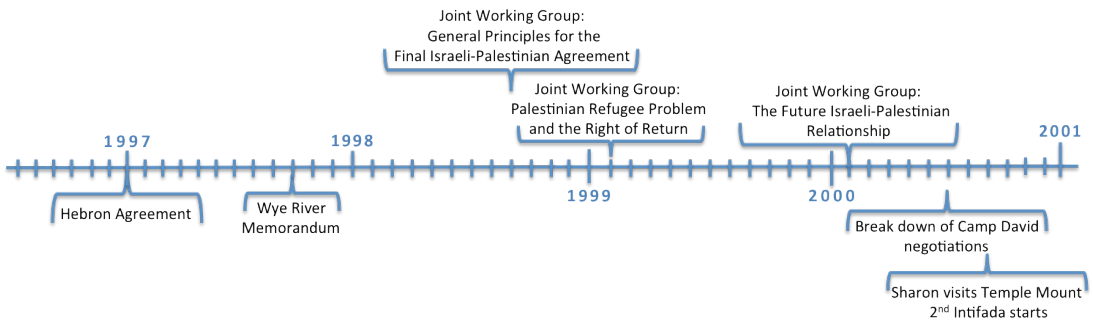
Finally, the Declaration called for permanent status negotiations to commence no later than the third year of the interim period. These negotiations were to include all remaining issues including the status of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, the fate of Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories, security arrangements, borders, and relations and cooperation with neighbors (Wrubel, 1994).

Reflections

The Norway Channel negotiations produced changes in the national identity perception of both parties. When the Israeli team gained official support in negotiating directly with PLO representatives, it equaled an implicit Israeli acknowledgement of Palestinian nationhood. This confirmed the national identities of Palestinians and paved the way for engaging in official negotiations.

The ensuing efforts of both parties showed that they both had moved towards accepting to negotiate the parameters of a two-state solution. When the Palestinian team accepted the Israeli proposition of a gradual process leading to the establishment of a two-state solution, a possibility they had been opposing so far, a true shift in their perception surfaced, showing that the Palestinians had gained enough trust in the Israeli commitment.

The achievements displayed in the Oslo Accords testify of the most salient shift in each party's national identity perception. The shift consisted in the mutual recognition of both sides' nationhood encapsulated in the

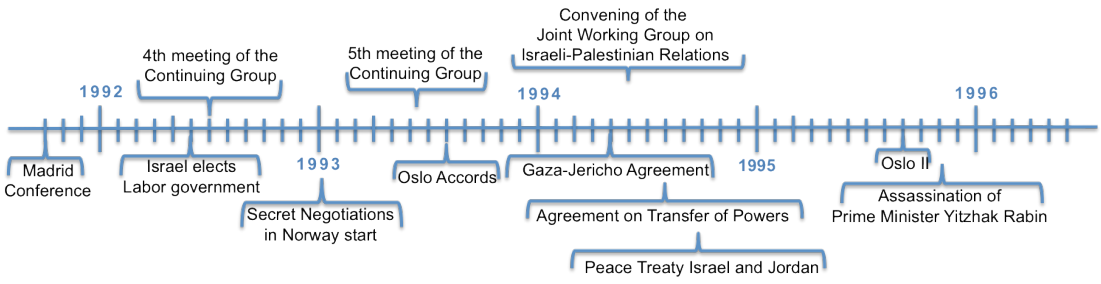


Declaration of Mutual Recognition. Mutual recognition of each other's nationhood made direct negotiations between Israel and the PLO possible, to which the Declaration of Principles laid the groundwork.

One of the shortcomings of the accord was that it left the nature of the Palestinian polity and its relationship to the State of Israel open to be determined in the final status negotiations. Many of the central issues that the two parties were supposed to resolve in an interim period, however, depend precisely on that nature of the Palestinian future polity.

Establishment of the Joint Working Group

After the announcement of the Oslo Agreement, third-party members of the Continuing Workshop group organized a meeting in Jerusalem with some of the participants. They decided to end the Continuing Workshop and start a new effort. They agreed to form a new group and convene further meetings that would follow a slightly different format than the Continuing Workshop. They felt that the most valuable contribution the group could make at that stage of the conflict was to draft joint concept papers on some of the political issues, which the Oslo accord had left to be resolved in the final-status negotiations. To this end, they established the Joint Working Group in early 1994, as a project of the Program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution (PICAR), based at Harvard's University's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs in Cambridge, USA.

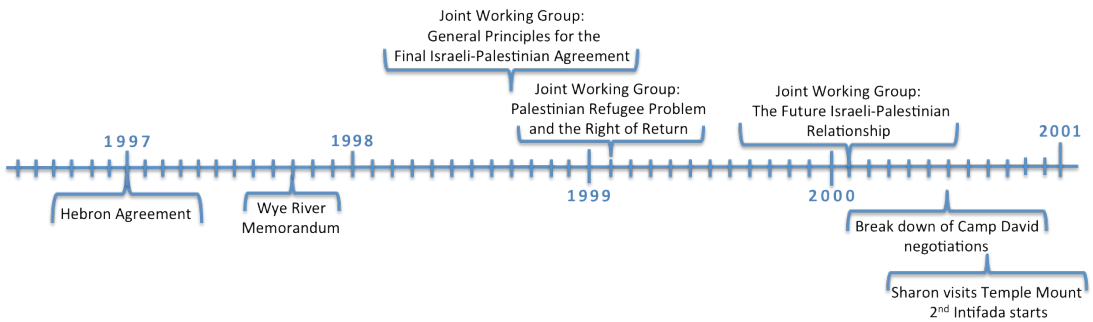


After the Gaza-Jericho Agreement [H18] was signed on May 4, 1995, the Group held its first three sessions and developed a set of general principles to guide a final agreement, which would open the way to a durable peace and reconciliation. The seven principles included: responsiveness to the needs for security, identity, dignity and prosperity as well as to the sense of justice of both parties transcending the balance of military, political, economic and demographic power; conduciveness to a relationship based on trust and equality; comprehensiveness, by including all individuals belonging to each people (also those living in the diaspora) and all outstanding issues; acceptance of the finality of the agreement balanced by gradualism and flexibility and relinquishment of past claims; security arrangements; economic well-being; national rights and self-determination.

During consecutive meetings, the Group drew on these principles to evaluate proposed options for resolving outstanding issues. At a later stage the Group revised the established principles in the light of new developments and published them as a PICAR Working Paper and as an article in the Middle East Journal (Joint Working Group, 1998).

Furthermore, the Group found that without a defined nature of the Palestinian polity none of the outstanding issues could be discussed and agreed

[H18] *The Gaza-Jericho Agreement between Israel and the PLO in Cairo established the Palestinian Authority and became known as the "land for peace" bargain as Israel commitment to turn territory over to the PA, and the Palestinian commitment to combat terror and prevent violence (Egeland, 1999).*



to base their analysis on the conception of a two-state solution, establishing a genuinely independent Palestinian state alongside of Israel.

Concept Paper on the Refugee Problem and Right of Return

Between 1995 and 1997, in the time-span between the signing of the Taba Accord[H19] and the conclusion of the Hebron Agreement[H20], the Joint Working

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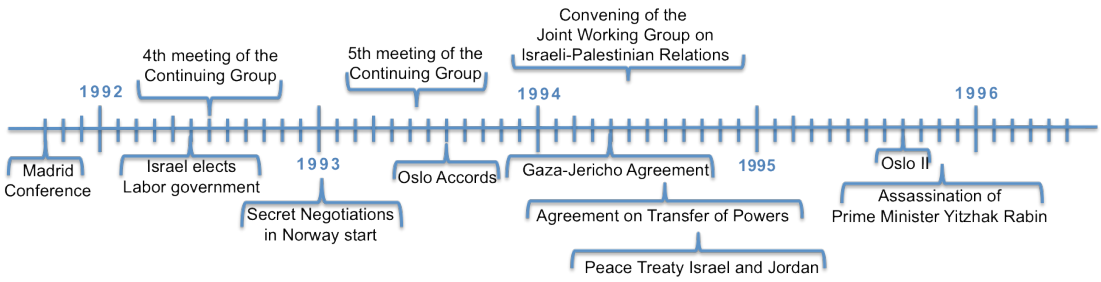
[H19] In the Egyptian resort Taba, Israel and the PLO concluded an interim agreement also known as Oslo II, which was signed in Washington on September 28, 1995. In general, the agreement dealt with civil affairs, economic relations, legal matters and security arrangements. In particular, the agreement included the Palestinian election of an 88-member Palestinian Legislative Council. The Accord divided the West Bank into area A, B and C. in Area A, Israel was to redeploy from six cities, whose overall security would be placed in Palestinian hands. Area B comprised Palestinian towns and villages for which Israel would be responsible for security and the Palestinians for public order. In area C – covering only unpopulated land – Israel would maintain full control. Negotiations for permanent status of the territories were to begin in May 1996, but were delayed for four years (Enderlin, 2002).

[H20] The Origins of the Hebron Agreement go back to 1994, when an Israeli from Kiryat Arba shot 29 Palestinians who were at prayer services at the Tomb of the Patriarchs.

The Tomb of the Patriarchs is described in the Book of Genesis as the field, which Abraham purchased as a burial place for his wife Sarah. According to Jewish Tradition, next to Sarah also the Matriarchs Rebecca and Leah the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, are buried in the Tomb. In 1266, the Islamic Mameluke rulers of Hebron barred Jews from entering the Tomb of the Patriarchs, allowing them only to ascend to the fifth and later the infamous seventh step outside the eastern wall. The incident resulted in demands for Hebron security guarantees from Palestinians, which were answered by the Oslo II suggestion to establish an International Presence in Hebron.

In 1996, riots and violence had brought the Israeli-Palestinian peace process close to collapsing. But faith in the peace process continued and on January 15, 1997, when the Hebron negotiations were completed, a Protocol concerning the Redeployment in Hebron was signed, specifying arrangements for the implementation



Group engaged in a thorough discussion of the issue of Palestinian refugees and the right of return and in this context, resumed their efforts to understand each other's national narrative, as some of the group members had started during the Continuing Workshop. The Group alternated between plenary group discussions and drafting sessions for which a subcommittee was appointed consisting of one Israeli and one Palestinian. After the first discussion session the subcommittee drafted a first outline identifying options for resolving the refugee problem. During the next plenary session, the Group discussed the prepared outline, from which the subcommittee prepared a first draft paper. The paper went through three drafts until the Joint Working Group was able to adopt it (Alpher and Shikaki et al., 1999).

The concept paper laid out four options for dealing with the issue of Palestinian refugees and the right of return and evaluated each of them in terms of its responsiveness to the concerns and needs of each side and its conformity with the established general principles. The first and second option represented the respective preferred solution of the Palestinian and Israeli side, reflecting each side's needs and concerns without responding to those of the other side. The third and forth option represented compromise solutions from each side that try to address the needs and concerns of the other side.

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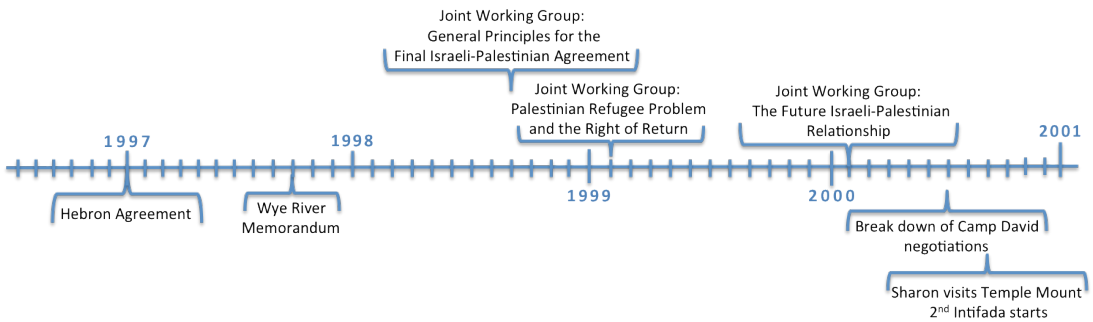
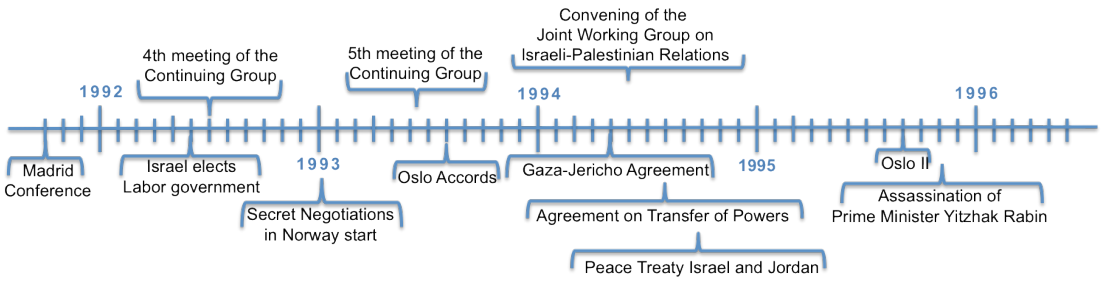
of the remaining redeployment provisions of the Oslo II Interim Agreement in three phases, ending no later than 1998. The Agreement included Israeli troop withdrawals from 80 percent of Hebron, the last West Bank city under Israeli occupation.



The first two options reflected the radically different narratives of the two parties. The Palestinian narrative maintained that Zionists forcibly expelled Arab refugees in 1948. Palestinians, therefore, insisted on the right of those refugees to return to their homes or to receive compensation. Further, they demanded that Israel unilaterally acknowledge its complete moral responsibility for the injustice they inflicted on the refugees. The Israeli narrative upheld that the Arabs caused the Palestinian refugee problem by declaring war upon the newly created State of Israel and therefore refused to accept the refugees' right of return. Moreover, Israel saw the return of Palestinian refugees as an existential threat, as it would undermine the Jewish character and the viability of the state.

The compromise options narrowed the gap between the two positions but did not fully reconcile them. The Palestinian compromise solution maintained that Israel acknowledge both its responsibility for creating the refugee problem and the individual moral right of Palestinian refugees to return. It recognized, however, that in view of the changed situation of the refugees over 50 years, and taking into account Israel's constraints, the return of only a "limited" number would be feasible. Israel would pay both individual and collective compensation. The Palestinians' case for an Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders would be strengthened as a result of their willingness to absorb the refugees in the Palestinian state. The Israeli compromise solution acknowledged Israel's share, along with the other parties to the 1948 war, of practical but not moral responsibility for the suffering of the refugees, and agree that rectification of their plight was a central goal of the peace process.

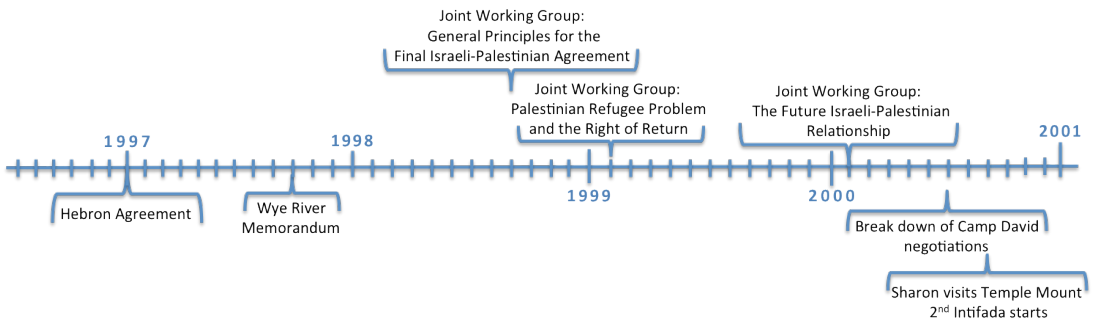


The solution further accepted repatriation of tens of thousands of refugees under Israel's family reunification program, and payments of collective compensation to the Palestinian state if paralleled by Arab State compensation for Jewish refugees from 1948.

Reflections

The compromise solutions reveal that the participants of the Joint Working Group have progressed in negotiating national identity aspects. The group members were now able to put in published form that Israel recognized its historic role in the events that created the refugee problem and that Palestinians realized that a massive exercise of the right of return was unrealizable. Israeli participants developed greater trust in Palestinian assurance that their future state would absorb a large number of refugees, while Palestinian participants received written confirmation that Israeli participants agreed that they were entitled to compensation for past grievances.

Both parties accommodated to a certain degree the view the other side has of their own history but have not yet fully understood the suffering of the other and failed to fully assume their own responsibility. For example, Israeli participants refused to acknowledge moral responsibility for Palestinian suffering, while Palestinians did not want to accept that resettlement of refugees cannot occur without certain organizational and monetary limitations on both sides, and that the reduction to a "limited" number of returning refugees may be rejected by the Palestinian population.



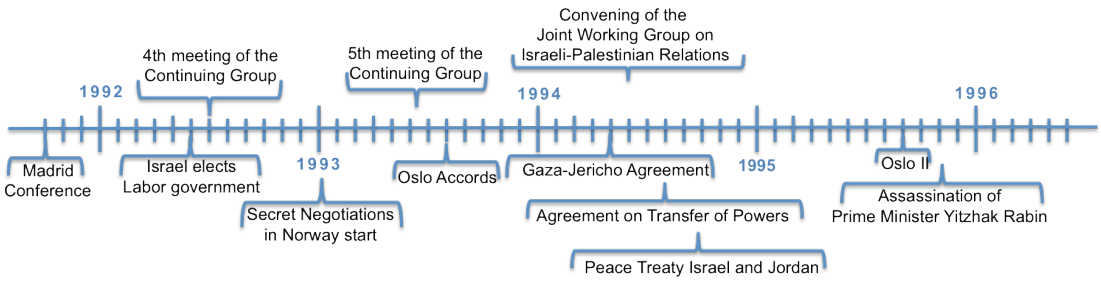
Concept Paper on the Future Israeli-Palestinian Relationship

The framework within which the Joint Working Group discussed the issues that the Oslo Accords had left to be resolved in the final-status negotiations was the long-term relationship between the two parties once a final agreement would have been signed. For each final-status issue, the question for the group had been *what* that relationship needed to look like if the final agreement were to provide the basis for a stable peace between the two parties.

According to the Group, a desirable relationship, granting both societies mutually beneficial cooperation, ultimate reconciliation and sustainable peace, needed to be embedded in a political agreement acceptable to both parties. The only feasible political arrangement on which the desired future relationship could be built was a two-state solution (Ma'oz et al., 2000).

While the premise of a two-state solution had already formed the basis to approach the refugee issue, the group picked up on the content of that premise itself in discussions held over the course of several meetings between 1996 and 1998 with the objective to establish the rationale for a two-state solution in a concept paper. The written product resulted again from a mixed process between subcommittee drafting, this time including a member of the third party in addition to one Israeli and one Palestinian participant, and plenary sessions in which the writings were reviewed and modified until the group agreed to a final version.

According to the Joint Working Group, a two-state solution required that both states would be sovereign, viable and secure. The Group, thus, called for an end of occupation and for the establishment of a genuinely independent

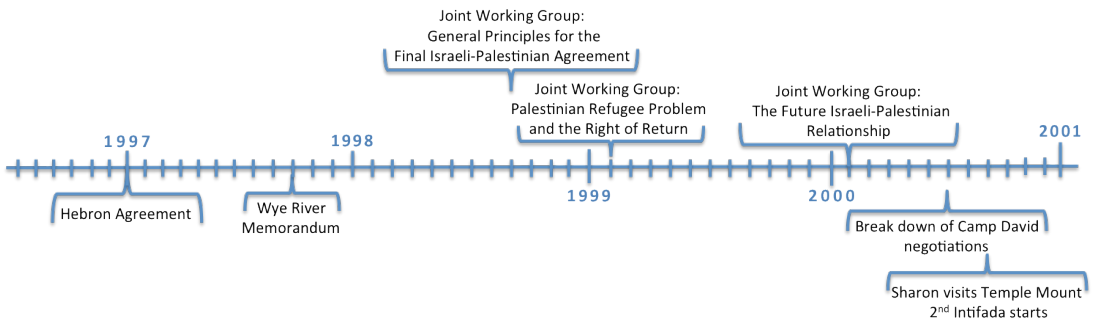


Palestinian state with mutually agreed-upon borders existing alongside of Israel. The Palestinian state must not be fragmented but free of extraterritorial enclaves, able to secure the rights of its citizens, and exercise control over its land, resources, and population.

Without proposing specific formulas for resolving final-status issues, the Joint Working Group sketched a general approach to resolve outstanding issues. Conflicting issues should be tackled by addressing both sides' central concerns and by seeking arrangements that are consistent with a genuine two-state solution and conducive to a desirable future relationship and ultimate reconciliation. Issues should be addressed as parts forming a whole, providing the possibility for negotiating trade-offs between concessions in different areas. The group outlined concrete terms for some of the outstanding issues.

The terms stipulated for the area of security – an issue most vital to the Israeli side – that each party should be protected by mutually acceptable arrangements responsive to both sides' concerns. Any constraints accepted by the Palestinian side would have to be balanced by Israeli reciprocal steps in another final-status category.

For setting the final borders, the points of departure for negotiations would have to be UN Resolution 242 and the 1967 lines. Border negotiations would need to respond to both sides' concerns: Palestinian insistence on the 1967 lines as the basis for accepting a partitioned Palestine, and Israeli stress on vital security interests such as the defensibility of borders.

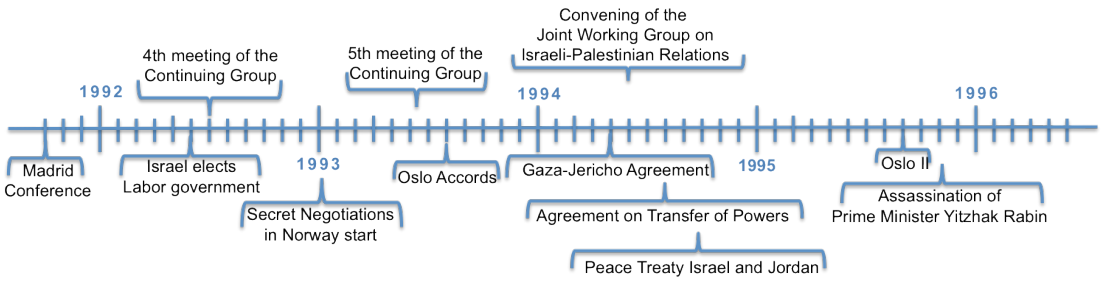


The solution of the Jerusalem problem should respect the national, cultural, religious, political, legal and historical rights of both peoples. Remarkably, the Joint Working Group agreed that Jerusalem should serve as the capital of both states being an open and undivided city and offering free access to the holy sites.

The problem of Israeli settlements should be resolved without compromising the Palestinian state and the national rights of its citizens and maintain the civil rights of Israelis remaining under Palestinian sovereignty.

In a next step, the Joint Working Group drew models and stages for a two-state solution describing the precise nature of the relationship between the two states and their societies. The Group advocated a relationship that would slowly move towards extensive cooperation and institutionalized arrangements, given their strong interdependence on issues like security, water supply and economic opportunities of participating in each other's markets.

The Group stressed the importance of building such cooperation in a gradual way of two or three stages, giving both societies enough time to transform their relationship and prepare for peaceful coexistence and historic reconciliation. Stage one would call for political separation of the two states and the establishment of essential cooperative arrangements. The separation of the two societies into two states would reduce friction and make it easier to combat terrorism. It would allow Palestinians to exercise their right to national self-determination, while it would help to legitimize Israel and facilitate its integration in the region. As a result the security of both states would be

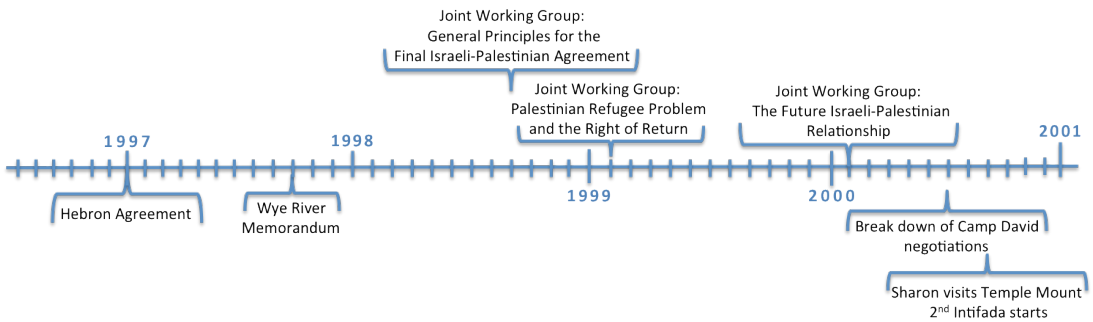


enhanced and trust between them could develop and engender cooperation. The arrangements for Jerusalem would be implemented at the first stage.

The second stage would consist of establishing closer political, economic and cultural ties between the two states. Depending on experiences during stage one, such activities would be expanded and eventually institutionalized in for example, joint economic ventures, the establishment of free trade zones and joint airports and seaports. Also socio-political activities would be intertwined in joint meetings of town councils and parliamentary groups as well as in professional and cultural activities. During this stage, cooperation would increase gradually, based on the experience that such activities were of mutual benefit, and enhance trust and respect between the two societies. The Group held that, cooperation developed in such a way contributes to reconciliation.

Stage three would involve more integration, based on the establishment of joint institutions. The Group recognized that to opt fur such a scenario was quite utopian and strengthened that such development was not necessary for reconciliation.

Lastly, the Group also looked at the general mood of their societies and their inclination towards agreeing to a two-state solution. In a poll of the Israeli population conducted in May 1999, 78 percent of the respondents indicated that they expected that the Peace Process would lead to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, while only 42 percent expressed that they were in favor of a Palestinian state. In a poll conducted in March of the same year,

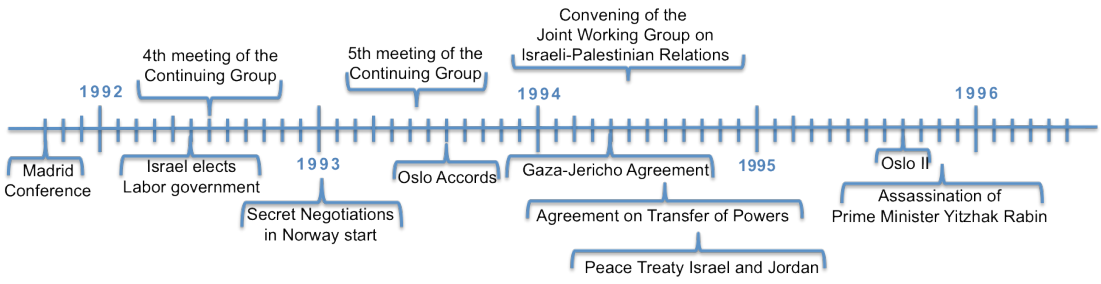


however, 56 percent of Israelis said that Palestinians deserved a state of their own and that the Palestinian demand for an independent state, was morally justified[1]. In a Palestinian poll conducted in June 1999, 45 percent of the respondents indicated that they expected the Peace Process to lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state, 27 percent were that it would not lead to a state while 29 percent said that they were not sure. In 1997, it were still 62 percent of the Palestinians, who expected the establishment of a state[2].

The approval for a two-state solution had been fluctuating over the preceding two years and the Joint Working Group recommended seizing the opportunity of realizing a mutually acceptable two-state solution while the parties were moving toward final status negotiations and before events could overtake the possibility for such a solution.

For that purpose, the Working Group recommended to start promoting the envisaged relationship right away through the fostering of existing functional relations – like economic ties, human rights activities, training of ambulance drivers and treatment of waste-water – and the development of new cooperative activities that work towards closing the political and economic gap between the two societies.

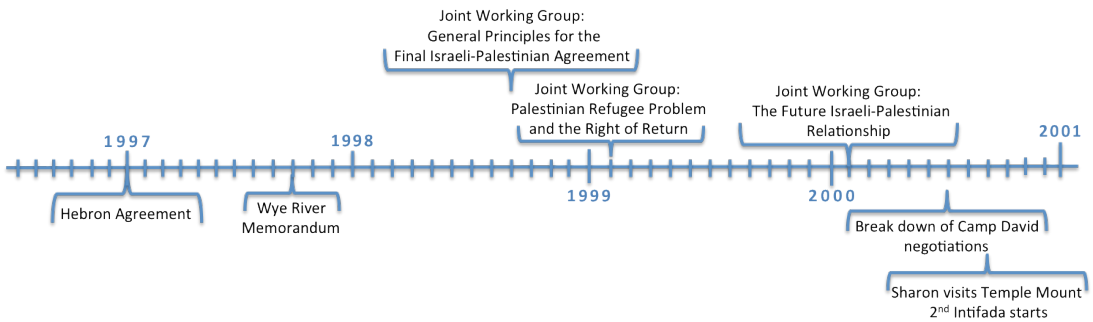
The Joint Working Group further advocated systematic efforts to change hostile attitudes and reduce stereotyped views in order to promote the proposed relationship. The Group suggested five types of information that might contribute to such change if conveyed in a context of equality and mutually rewarding activities, which would make it difficult to dismiss positive qualities of the other as atypical and to keep the stereotype intact. The first type of



information involves getting to know each other's history, religion and culture, to establish points of contact and common interest. The second type proposed that each side present the other with its national narrative and national self-image in order to gain understanding of each other's perspective. In a next step, it should become possible for each side to acknowledge the other's experience and own truth and thereby learn to respect the claims and concerns resulting from that reality. If the parties succeed in learning about the other's experiences they could become open toward exposing each other to the variety and complexity of their societies and replace the monolithic view with a dynamic conception of the other society. The fifth type of knowledge consists of exploring common elements between the two societies, like the shared Abrahamic background, historic and cultural links as well as common values such as the importance of the family.

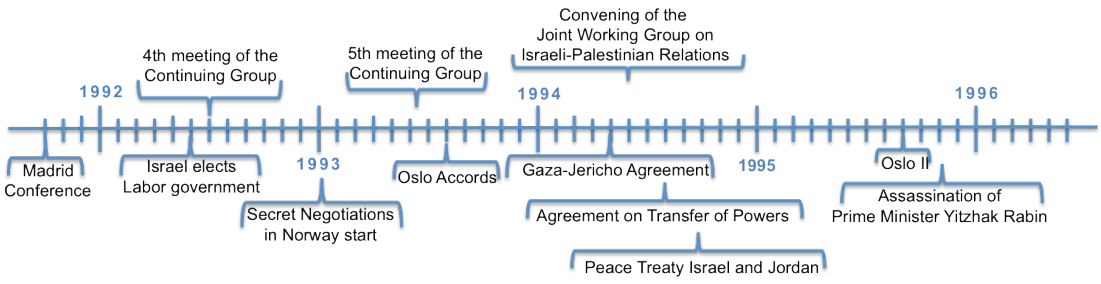
Reflections

It is remarkable that the Joint Working Group managed to agree on parameters of a two-state solution incorporating recommendations for solving the most central final-status issues. The Group's agreement to publish their written statements revealed that it was possible for Israelis and Palestinians to conceive of sharing the land that they both claim. This shows that the participants have were able to negotiate national identity aspects with regard to territorial ownership. This move also included the seemingly insurmountable issue of Jerusalem, which is a central symbol of national identity for both sides.



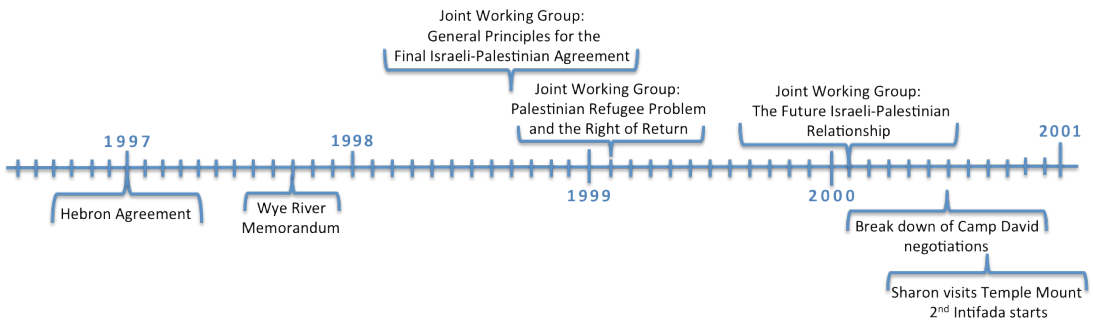
The participants were able to conceive of turning their capital into a shared city and envisaged Jerusalem as an open and undivided city with free access to all holy sites.

In subsequent meetings of the Joint Working Group a paper on Israeli settlements was drafted, which has remained unpublished (Kelman, 2002: 84).



Notes:

[1] The Joint Working Group cited in "Future Israeli-Palestinian Relationship" published in the *Middle East Policy* in 2000 on page 11, polls conducted by the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research at Tel Aviv University.
[2] In the same publication the Joint Working Group cites opinion polls conducted by the Center for Palestine Research and Studies (CPRS) in Nablus.



7 Influence of the Identity Factor on the Peace Process

The influence of the identity factor on the Peace Process will be discussed in three steps: by evaluating the long-term impact of IPS as a conflict resolution method applied during the Peace Process, by looking at what kind of identity changes the method was able to provoke, and by analyzing the nature and quality of the observed changes.

In a first step, the general impact of IPS as a conflict resolution method – on the micro-level of workshop discussions as well as on the macro-level of Israeli and Palestinian policy-making processes – is evaluated on the basis of the author's personal interviews with former workshop participants.

In a second step, the specific impact of IPS as an identity management tool will be examined. The author first reviews the identity changes that appeared in the workshop transcripts prepared by third-party members, and assesses whether the six identity elements, as singled out by Kelman, had been negotiated during workshop discussions. The author then compares the observed findings to the experience of former participants.

In a third step, the study analyzes the observed identity changes with regard to their quality and sustainability, by pointing to different critics of the Oslo Accords – some of them former workshop participants – and by referring to Kelman's model of social influence. The observation of events occurring during the Peace Process has revealed a number of crucial changes in Israeli and Palestinian national identity. At first glance it seemed that these changes would be sufficient for the achievement of a comprehensive solution of the conflict. The fact that such a solution has not been reached until the present day, leads to a questioning of the nature and quality of the observed changes and to a critical assessment of the impact of the identity factor on the Peace Process.

Long-Term Impact of Interactive Problem Solving

For the purpose of evaluating the long-term impact of IPS, the author has interviewed five Palestinians and eight Israelis between 2002 and 2006, who have participated either in the Continuing Workshop or in the Joint Working Group, or took part in both sets of meetings[1]. All except one of the interviews are included in the annex.

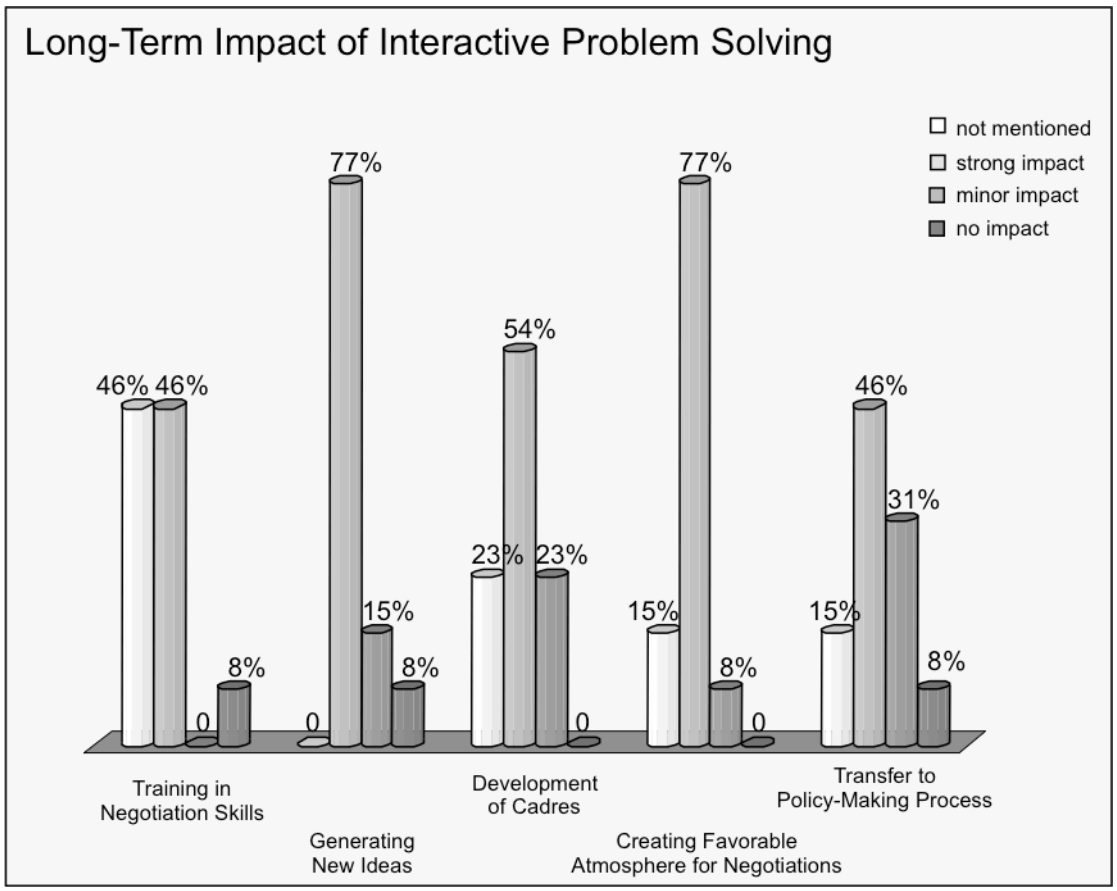
The interviewees were asked how they rated their experience of participating in interactive problem-solving workshops in general, what they perceived as positive impacts of the method on the conflict resolution process, and what they saw as limitations. They were further asked about new ideas that were generated through the discussions and to what extent the new ideas had been transferred to the larger policy-making process.

To account for the view of third party members, the author interviewed Herbert C. Kelman and Harold Saunders with regard to their experience with the method, how they rated its ability to induce change and transfer change from the individual participant to decision-makers.

The interviewees' vivid memory of details of discussions held some ten years earlier demonstrates that Interactive Problem Solving had a lasting impact on workshop participants. The method's strengths were found to lie in uncovering underlying conflict causes, in generating empathy for the suffering of the other, and in building respect for both parties' traditions and beliefs.

Most of the interviewees on both sides were impressed with the crucial additional knowledge they gained about the other party, although they had had encounters with members of the other constituency prior to the workshop participation. Many referred to the method as engendering a circle of people engaged in conflict resolution, giving them the opportunity of getting to know influential representatives of the other party and to develop necessary communication skills to uphold a sustainable dialogue. A number of the

interviewees mentioned that the method managed to generate new ideas and provoke a distribution of the new inputs to the wider policy-making process of their constituencies. Interestingly, Kelman referred to similar strengths of the method that favorably contributed to the Peace Process in his interview with the author as well as in some of his publications (Kelman, 1995; 2005; 2008).



On the whole the interviews support that, five of the most prominent features of the method's impact are the development of cadres, training in negotiation skills, generating new ideas, transferring new ideas to the policy-making process, and creating a political atmosphere favorable to official negotiations. The ways in which the method has impacted the peace process are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Better knowledge of the other side, new

ideas for conflict solutions, and professional negotiation skills, contribute to a successful transfer of new perspectives to the decision-making level and prepare the ground for negotiations. These developments create an atmosphere that in turn, strengthens and supports ideas spread by former workshop participants.

Israelis and Palestinians mostly agreed on the nature of the effects that IPS was able to produce. To sketch a differentiated picture of the participants' evaluation of the method's impact, the author cites some individual answers of representatives from each side.

Developing Cadres

The term *cadre* refers to the dozens of Israelis and Palestinians who have participated in one or more of the over fifty workshops or similar forms of direct communication facilitated by IPS over the years. Through the workshop activities this group of people had acquired in-depth knowledge about the other side and their concerns. Further, they gained experience and skills in communicating with the other side.

Many workshop participants were in positions to influence the policy-making process, they were natural candidates for making a contribution to the peace process, and because of their engagement in direct communication with the other party they had the qualifications and effectiveness to be involved in the official negotiations. Indeed most of the participants in the Continuing Workshop became engaged as advisors or negotiators in the official talks that started with the Madrid Conference. Also during the process ensuing from the Oslo Agreements, workshop-"alumni" had an active role in the Israeli and Palestinian cabinet, parliament and foreign ministry and in leading positions in other official agencies.

Ten out of 13 interviewees mentioned the impact of IPS on the creation of cadres and seven rated that impact as strong. Those who referred to IPS as creating a cadre, or a like-minded group of influential individuals, linked that creation to the ability of IPS to teach negotiation skills, and to contribute to a favorable atmosphere for negotiations.

*Israeli view*s: One former participant referred to the workshops as bringing the "right" people together in a specific atmosphere that was able to build trust to work with someone from the other side.

Palestinian views: one interviewee felt that the meetings created confidence and a familiarity with regard to the people and the positions on each side, which was very helpful for the later involvement in the official negotiations.

Training in Negotiation Skills

Negotiation skills in the context of interactive problem-solving workshops have been referred to as the ability to formulate one's own objectives in a non-threatening way and to develop a language that both sides were able to speak and understand.

Seven interviewees mentioned that the workshops developed their negotiation skills, and all except one of them rated it as a very valuable experience. Many participants felt that the workshop discussions prepared them for official negotiations as well as further Track II engagements.

Palestinian views: An interviewee, who had formed part of the official Palestinian negotiating team in Washington, reported that he had benefited greatly in terms of learning how to formulate Palestinian concerns in a way that could be understood by the Israelis.

Israeli views: One Israeli participant pointed out that the problem-solving workshops were a pioneer Track Two initiative that created a sort of school for negotiators and for the development of diplomatic skills.

Creating a Favorable Atmosphere for Negotiations

The atmosphere conducive to negotiations was strengthened by the new relationship between significant segments of the two communities that evolved over the years. The atmosphere was generated by the development of a more differentiated image of the other, a de-escalatory language, and a working trust.

The contribution of the workshops to a peace-conducive atmosphere was mentioned by 85 percent of the interviewees, one participant rated that contribution as minor, while ten believed this impact to be very strong.

Israeli views: One participant maintained that the workshop meetings were instrumental in bringing about a revolutionary change in Israeli public opinion leading, first, to a gradual acceptance of the existence of the Palestinian people and, subsequently, to a realization that it was necessary to talk to the PLO and that a two-state solution was possible.

Palestinian views: One interviewee saw the workshops as being part of the phenomenon of the time, in which many politically active Palestinians were engaged in, to work towards reaching a peaceful settlement and to create a state for the Palestinians. The workshops were one of many important initiatives that were undertaken at various levels, which were all fed back into what was happening on each side within the political leadership.

Generating New Ideas

All former participants referred to the potential ability of workshop discussions to generate new ideas for possible solutions. One felt that at the time the Joint Working Group met, the workshop format could not contribute

anything new or anything more to the peace process than the official efforts. All other participants were happy with the many new stimuli they received from their workshop participation.

An example of a new idea that was generated among workshop participants is the creation by one Israeli and one Palestinian participant of an online platform called *Bitter Lemons*, where representatives of both sides are able to communicate their view of current issues. This online platform continues to operate today.

Israeli views: The Israeli participant who co-founded *Bitter Lemons* mentioned that the realization of the online platform was the pinnacle of a process instilled in both sides through the workshop participation. On a personal level, the discussions made him realize that it was *not* necessary to agree with the other side in order to have an open dialogue about conflict issues.

Palestinian views: The Palestinian co-founder of *Bitter Lemons* said he had learned more about each side's boundaries and the possibilities for constructive change in regard to particular components of the conflict. He gained a better understanding of how contrasting views of different political parties as well as the divergent demands and requirements of the two sides' constituencies shaped the positions that the two parties defended in the official negotiations. He also recognized to what extent the positions on either side were flexible and where each party set its limits.

Transfer to the Policy-Making Process

Eleven out of the thirteen interviewees referred to the issue of transferring new ideas to the policy-making process. Only one of them rated the transfer process as ineffective, while four described it as successful. Three former participants thought that the transfer did occur, as they fed the newly

generated ideas into their publications and discussions with policy-makers and colleagues, but rated it as only partially successful because they felt it did not reach enough people and had only limited impact.

Palestinian views: One participant mentioned that some Palestinian participants in Kelman's workshops had subsequently become negotiators in official talks with the Israelis. Also, some Israeli participants in Kelman's workshops had become advisors to the official Israeli delegations of the formal peace talks. The participant rated this as an example for effective transfer from Kelman's workshops to the formal policy-making process.

Israeli views: One participant referred to the wide distribution in Arabic and Hebrew of the Joint Working group's paper "The Palestinian Refugee Problem and the Right of Return"(Alpher, Shikaki et al., 1999). He explained that the paper had also been sent to members of the Knesset and that Ehud Barak in one of his first speeches as Prime Minister said with regard to the refugee issue that Israel had to show empathy for the Palestinian suffering and had to recognize that Israel formed part of the overall problem, even though it does not take sole responsibility for what happened to the Palestinians. The participant was convinced that Barak had taken the wording from the Working Group's paper, although he never asked him to confirm that. Another participant maintained that the workshop meetings were instrumental in bringing about a revolutionary change in Israeli public opinion leading, first, to a gradual acceptance of the existence of the Palestinian people, and subsequently, to a realization that it was necessary to talk to the PLO and that a two-state solution was possible.

The Method's Limitations

Interestingly, many interviewees were concerned with the structure of the method, just like the third-party members. A number of former participants

preferred the structure of the Continuing Workshop, where the focus was placed on discussions only, to the proceedings of the Joint Working Group that aimed to produce publishable documents. In the interview with the author, Kelman reflects on the preference of a model that focuses on free discussions that do not explicitly aim at producing a written document, but offer the possibility thereof.

Another point that Kelman has been concerned with since the very early start of the method is the difficulty to maintain achieved changes and to transfer them to the policy-making process. According to Kelman, the ease of maintaining achieved changes depends first, on the nature of the workshop setting and second, on the surrounding to which participants return (Kelman and Cohen, 1976: 83). If workshop settings do not reflect the reality of the participants' home environment, the chances are for maintaining changed attitudes in the social-political environment are slim. The reason for this is that new attitudes may be associated with the unique stimuli of the workshop setting and that these attitudes may fail to generalize to the home environment's radically different stimuli. A workshop setting with little resemblance to conditions at home reduces resistance to change but fails to build immunity against the pressures to which the new attitudes will be exposed at the return of participants. Fellow nationals may reject attitudes and views generated within the workshop if they are perceived as too unrealistic or idealistic. An Israeli participant confirmed this view. He mentioned that he had worked very effectively with his Palestinian counterpart in the small sub-group. When they presented their work in the plenary session, the other Palestinian participants objected vehemently to the suggested ideas.

The capability of participants to feed changes into the policy process also depends on the nature of these changes. If they consist of information from the other side, for example, about increased willingness to entertain some new

lines of negotiation, decision-makers will be likely to act on it. If the changes consist of suggestions for reformulating some policies of a participant's own government, the chances for adopting them are very slight despite the participant's proximity to the decision-making center.

The former participants were also very much concerned with what the method could not achieve or where their expectations were not fulfilled. Generally, Israelis were more satisfied than the Palestinians with the results that the members of the Joint Working Group had published, while both parties felt that the remaining gaps between the notions of the two constituencies reflected political reality.

Israeli views: Some Israeli participants criticized the Joint Working Group for departing from the initial structured workshop format and adopting a less social-psychologically oriented but rather unstructured form; while others felt that the method's emphasis on theoretical patterns was fairly strong and favored a more intuitive approach. Some mentioned that the method was preaching to the converted and that, from their point of view, mainstream opinion was not fully represented by participants on either side. One of them held that the method's abilities to reach decision makers were limited.

Palestinian views: Some Palestinian interviewees saw the method's limitations in failing to bridge the gap between the different arguments discussed with regard to the refugee problem and ownership of the land, and reaching an agreement that satisfied both sides. Two participants said that the pressure of producing a written document constrained progress. One of them thought that the method was able to contribute more to the peace process during the pre-negotiation phase than while accompanying official negotiations. This participant, who became a member of the official negotiating team, felt that the method helped to create readiness for talking to the other side

but that the process of negotiating formal solutions was best left to official politicians.

[1] Excerpts from the interviews held with former workshop participants have been previously discussed by the author in the article "Herbert Kelman's Contribution to the Methodology of Practical Conflict Resolution" that was published in 2010 in an honorary issue for Herbert C. Kelman of the Pioneers in U.S. Peace Psychology series in the *Peace and Conflic*t Journal.

8 Achievements of Identity Management

To review the specific impact of IPS as an identity management tool with the objective to negotiate identity elements, the identity changes that appeared in the workshop testimonies are assessed by comparing them to the six identity elements, which Kelman has proposed as being negotiable: *monolithic identity perception*, *exclusive national identity*, *ideological dreams*, *order of priorities*, *national narratives*, and *negation of the other* (2001). The author then compares her own interpretations of the identity negotiation process to the experience of former workshop participants

The negotiation of i*deological dreams* and a new *order of priorities* did not appear in the testimonies of workshop discussions. Form the participants' discussions, however, can be concluded that these identity aspects had already been altered to a considerable extent prior to the workshop meetings. This became apparent, for example, during the third meeting of the Continuing Workshop, when Israeli participants confirmed that it was no longer a policy objective to pursue the ideological dream of Greater Israel; while Palestinian participants made it very clear that their primary objective was to strengthen the form of their political organization and build an autonomous political entity, rather than control the whole of Palestine.

During a Joint Working Group meeting a new order of priorities was noticeable, when Palestinian participants were able to engage in a debate about limiting the number of returning refugees. Although they would not accept such limitation, they were ready to hear why Israelis are concerned about the issue. On the side of Israeli participants a reordering of priorities was recognizable, when they debated the possibility of giving up their exclusive control over Jerusalem in favor of turning it into an open and undivided city.

In a more vivid and explicit manner, the parties negotiated their *monolithic* as well as *exclusive identity* perception. During the discussion of the Gulf Crisis in the first meeting of the Continuing Workshop, the parties were able to distinguish between the boundaries of their political interests and the boundaries of their emotional attachments. By hearing the underlying motivations of the other polity's positions, both sides discovered that enormous changes had occurred in how they viewed their own role in the conflict and that those changes were not yet reflected by their polities.

As a result, the parties engaged in negotiating the inclusion of a new perception of their conflict roles into an additional layer of identity that enabled them to keep their emotional attachments as well as to develop new political objectives. Thereby they were able to move towards a transcendent identity perception that opened the possibility for pragmatic cooperation within their confrontational relationship and for a committed negotiation process.

The negotiation of the *monolithic identity perception* also surfaced during the discussion of the future Israel-Palestinian relationship in the Joint Working Group. The wording of the formulation, hammered out by the group, shows that representatives of the conflict parties were able to address their perception of territorial claims by distinguishing between their need to uphold the attachment to their homeland and their need for keeping or establishing ownership and sovereignty of a given territory engulfing only part of their homeland.

The *exclusive perception of national identity* was negotiated when participants discussed their perception of the other with regard to the issues raised by the Gulf Crisis. By learning what the underlying motivations of the other side's action were, each side was able to understand the other's reasoning and discovered that their objectives were less threatening than what they seemed. Moreover, both parties realized that each was motivated by the same

objective: to safeguard security for their own polity. In due course, participants on both sides acknowledged the role and the shortcomings of their polities with regard to the deterioration of the situation. This acted as a catalyst for opening up to a new understanding of the other with regard to more central conflict issues.

During the discussion of the Intifada each side was able to look at their own acts through the eyes of the other. Interestingly, Israeli participants were able to identify positive aspects of the Intifada, in the sense that by consolidating the Palestinian leadership, the Intifada produced a necessary condition for negotiating a political conflict solution. Subsequently, the two parties started to revise their view about their objectives being mutually exclusive to discover that they were mutually inclusive, in the sense that they needed each other in order to attain their security objectives.

Most prominent were the negotiation of *national narratives* and the *negation of the other*. During the discussion of the Continuing Group about the right to self-determination, the perception of some participants shifted from completely denying the impact of their community on the course of the conflict towards accepting the reality of the other and of how the other experienced the acts of their own party. The negotiation process further evolved during the discussion about the right of return, which confronted the parties with their own history and with the history of the other. Both parties realized that they deplored grievances and needed the other to acknowledge those grievances. As the parties began to realize that each of them had experienced the same events in a completely different way, they were able to accept the story of the other as being true to them. In a next step, participants understood that their own party formed an element in the narrative of the other and vise versa. Each party, then, was able to acknowledge that their own actions had consequences for the other. Such acknowledgement was expressed during a Joint Working Group meeting,

when the participants managed to agree to a written formulation, stating that they both shared responsibility for past actions.

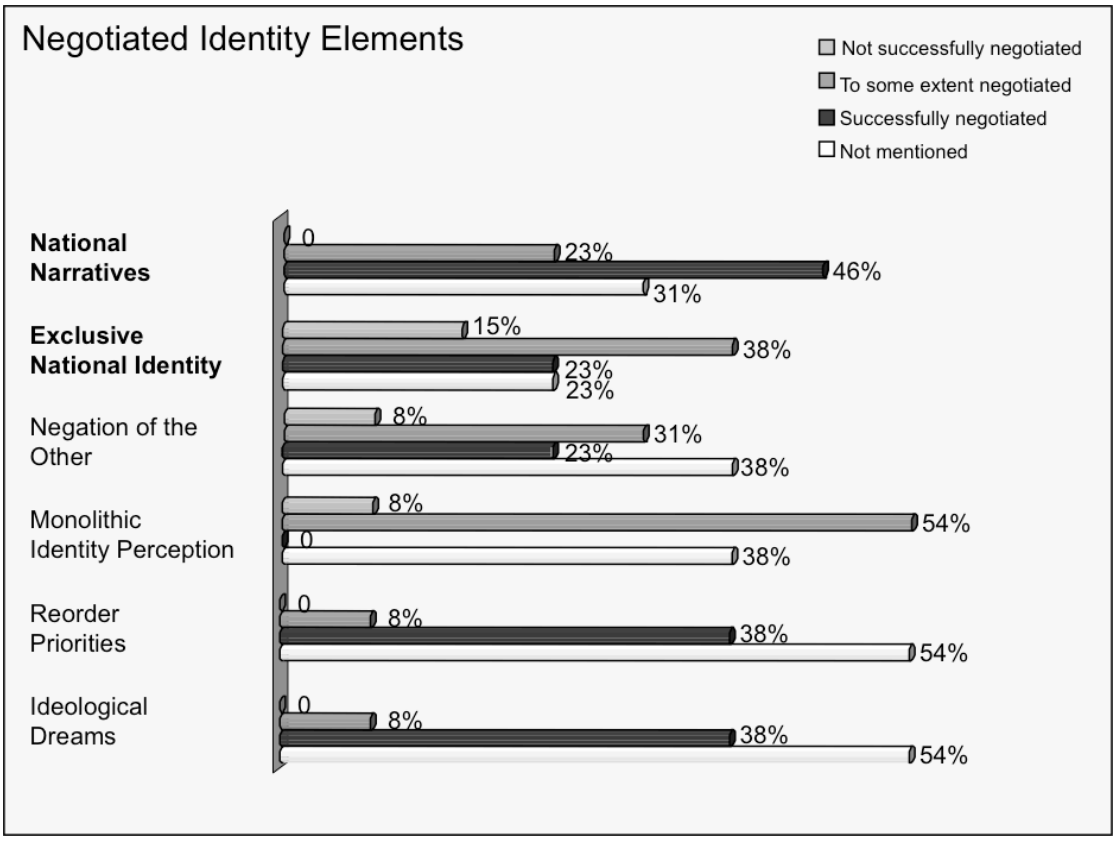
The discussion about the right to self-determination also bore aspects of negotiating the acceptance of the other. The deliberations revealed that the Palestinian motivation for claiming self-determination stemmed from the need for national identity. The discussions further clarified that both parties were ultimately asking for the recognition of their national existence. Israelis and Palestinians both realized that they shared the fundamental need for recognized national identity. For Israeli participants this meant that it was easier for them to understand why the right to self-determination was so important for Palestinians. For Palestinian participants this meant that it was easier for them to understand why their claim for self-determination was frightening to Israelis.

The negotiation process evolved and reached a most important peak, when Palestinian participants confirmed that exerting their right for self-determination would not aim at endangering the existence of Israel. A future Palestinian polity would respect the finality of their state borders and thereby the borders of Israel. In response to this implicit acceptance of the Israeli state, members of the Israeli group declared their acceptance of Palestinians as a people and affirmed that this acceptance was widely shared among the Israeli public.

To further asses the nature of the achieved changes in the identity structure of Israeli and Palestinian participants, it is indispensable to compare the author's findings with the first-hand experience of workshop participants, to see whether their understanding differs from the author's observations, and how they experienced the negotiation processes and the ensuing changes. The author was careful to capture differences and similarities in the experience of Palestinians and Israelis.

Israeli and Palestinian Experience of Identity Negotiation

To assess how workshop participants experienced the observed processes of identity negotiation, the interviewed participants were asked how their perception of themselves, their own constituency, and the other side had changed throughout the workshop discussions. They were also asked to identify concrete moments, at which the occurrence of such changes became apparent.



When looking at the answers of the interviewed participants with regard to Kelman's six negotiable identity elements, all of them are referred to – some only implicitly, some very directly – as having been tackled during workshop discussions. With regard to the quality and comprehensiveness of the negotiated aspects, however, the answers of the interviewees do not always confirm the author's observations.

Unlike the observation of the author, interviewed participants found that most decisive changes occurred in the way each party sees asymmetries of power distribution and security concerns – issues that belong to the identity aspect of an exclusive national identity perception. Similar to the author's interpretation, interviewees felt that decisive changes had occurred in the way each side understands the national narrative of the other. Also, the experience of the interviewed participants confirms the author's impression that some change was reached with regard to accepting the other's national existence, although the participants did not rate it as prominently as the author. A contested identity element was the monolithic identity perception, which more than half the participants mentioned as having been discussed, but none of them rated the negotiation a successful.

The negotiation of an exclusive or rather *inclusive identity perception* was referred to by 77 percent – ten out of 13 - of the interviewees. Some of them mentioned how they discovered that, while the conflict was asymmetric in terms of power distribution, it was symmetric in terms of security concerns. 23 percent of those, who mentioned the issues, said that the discussions successfully pointed them to shared claims and common identity elements, 38 percent rated the discussion as reaching that end to a certain extent, while two participants found the discussions to be unsuccessful.

69 percent of the interviewed participants referred to the discussions of *national narratives*. Many interviewees commented how the discussion about the right of return of Palestinian refugees had triggered tremendous changes with regard to how each side related to their own and to the other's national narrative. Many described it to be a very useful but also difficult process. 46 percent of those mentioning the topic rated the discussions as having led to a changed view of the other's narrative and an acceptance of how the other party views past events, while 23 percent thought that the discussions reached that

end only to some extent. Some said that hearing the other's story made it possible for them to accept the other's truth without necessarily having to approve of everything it entailed. Other participants said that, hearing the other side's story of their shared history, made it possible for them to understand their own role in that story. Accepting that role did not equal to just accept blame but had more to do with accepting the other party's reality.

While the author found that the identity aspect *negation of the other* was constructively discussed in workshop meetings, the interviewed participants were not of the same view. Nine out of 13 interviewees referred to the issue, while only three confirmed explicitly that they accepted the existence of the other. Four participants felt that the acceptance of national existence was to some extent successful and one participant rated that negotiation process as clearly unsuccessful.

There was a general tone in most of the former participants' accounts of their workshop experience that it was not possible to completely close the gap between what the representatives of the conflict parties needed on a psychological level in terms of accommodating the existence of other within their own identity definition, and what that did or did not entail in terms of political concessions. Some participants referred to clear limits in their counterparts' position towards making concessions that would follow from a true acceptance of the other's national identity.

Interestingly, 62 Percent of the workshop participants, again nine out of 13 interviewees, mentioned instances, in which their *monolithic identity perception* was addressed. But while the acceptance of the other had been rated as successfully negotiated by 23 percent, *not one* participant on either side found that a transcendent identity had been reached. While many participants were able to recognize that their sentimental attachments do not coincide with political attachments, they were unable to translate that recognition into

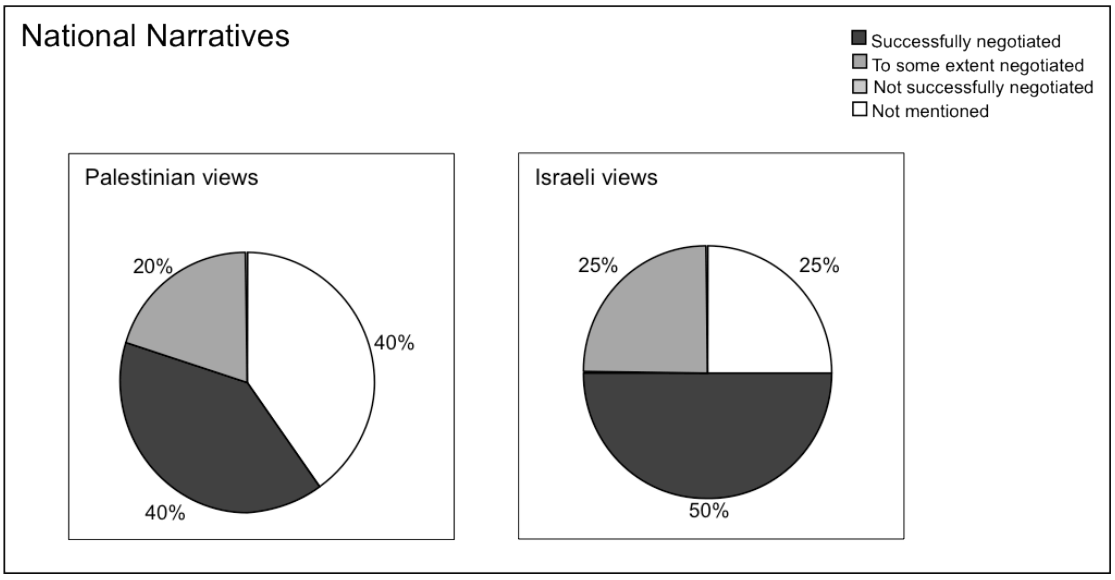
practical terms of limiting their sovereignty and control only part of the shared homeland.

Similarly to the author's observation the interviewed participants did not attribute a pivotal role to the *negotiation of ideological dreams* or the *reordering of priorities*. Only six interviewees referred to the two aspects and only one commented in a negative way about those aspects. One interviewee confirmed that exaggerated images had been excluded from their political agendas; while another felt, that all workshop participants had obviously buried old exaggerated images, as they were ready to commit themselves to discuss relevant conflict issues with the primary objective to finding a political solution to the conflict.

With regard to the quality of the negotiated identity aspects, which former participants referred to most prominently in their interviews, it is interesting to look at the answers of Israelis and Palestinian separately as they do not always agree with regard to the comprehensibility of negotiated changes. Also, the different angles from which the two sides look at the same issue reveal important insight for future tasks of conflict resolution methods and the further refinement of identity management tools.

National Narratives

National Narrative was the identity element that the interviewed participants referred to most vigorously and as the most prominent realm of change. Israelis and Palestinians experienced the negotiation process differently. Two out of five Palestinians did not refer to the identity aspect, while on the Israeli side 75 percent mentioned the discussion of national narratives. The two sides were closer in their rating of the quality of the negotiation process. The majority on both sides of those who referred to the negotiation process rated it as successful or as partly successful.



Israeli views: One participant said he had experienced a change in his own perception with regard to the refugee issue. Initially, he had thought that Israelis had no reason to apologize for what had happened during the war of 1948, as they did not start the war but were attacked by neighboring Arab states. Hearing the Palestinian side of the story made him realize that Israelis indeed needed to apologize and assume a share in the responsibility of causing Palestinian refugees.

Another participant mentioned a pivotal moment of the same discussion when the group had reached a complete deadlock. An Israeli participant said to the Palestinians, addressing one in particular who had been in Israeli prison for many years, that he was aware of what Palestinians had been going through and that his participation was very moving and strongly appreciated by all members of the group. This manifestation of empathy and respect for the suffering of the other led the group out of the discussion impasse and opened the way for constructive discussions. One participant said that the workshop participation had made him more open to acknowledging Palestinian identity and generated

a better understanding of how deep their connection to the land was and that it was just as important as their own.

Palestinian views: One interviewee remembered how demanding the discussion about the right of return had been for her and that her strong reaction to some arguments had triggered an Israeli participant to realize, for the first time, how difficult the issue was for Palestinians. The participant felt that her own perception of the Israeli side changed a lot as she began to understand the Israeli narrative and accept it as a given. The participant realized that one of the reasons for Israeli reluctance to acknowledge responsibility for the refugee situation was their fear that this acknowledgement would entail material concessions. She felt that the perception of the Israelis changed when they heard that it was indispensable for Palestinians to receive an apology for what had happened in 1948, and that the apology would not require Israeli concession of more land.

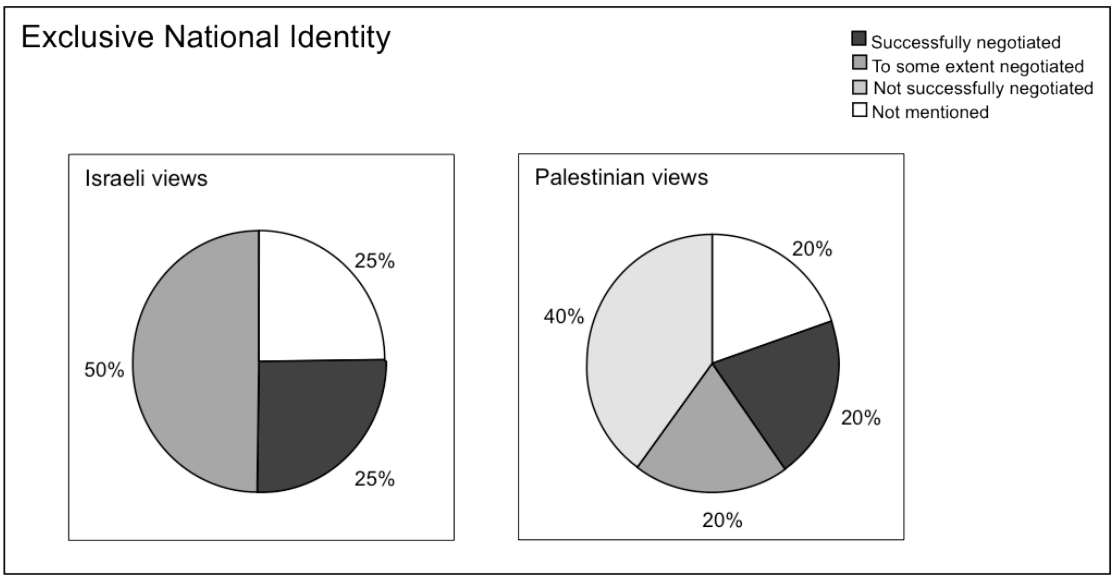
According to the participant, both sides learnt to distinguish between claiming an apology from the other for past acts and claiming restitution for past acts. The interviewee remembered being asked by an Israeli participant whether Palestinians could agree to refrain from asking for the return of their former houses in Jaffa. She answered that emotionally they would cling to that claim but knew rationally that they had to give it up. Important for her was the acknowledgement of Israelis that Palestinians had paid an enormous price in order to get to the point of being ready to forgo such claims. The participant rated that kind of negotiation, which touches on all the wounds and then looks at how to heal them, as building confidence and trust in a very strong manner.

Another interviewee said she had gained understanding why Israelis resisted to listening to the Palestinian story, as hearing the Palestinian narrative meant undoing their own stories about descent and origin, which they had

grown up with. She explained that those stories about one's state, and about who one is, were very hard to change.

Exclusive Identity Perception

Interestingly, Kelman confirms the experience of interviewed participants. He said in his interview with the author that both sides had decisively moved towards an inclusive identity perception. While in the early days of interactive problem-solving workshops, Palestinians tended to trivialize the security concerns of Israel as a nuclear power, they had realized over time that everyday concerns about the safety of people traveling on a bus, for instance, were not minimized by nuclear weapons. Also, they realized that the strategic situation of Israel in the Middle East does create real security concerns. On the Israeli side, participants came to be more aware of the power asymmetry between the two groups and started to compensate for the power differences. They learnt not to dictate to Palestinians how things had to be done but to listen to what they had to say on a given subject.



Looking at the perspective of the interviewed participants, four out of eight Israelis rated the negotiation process leading from an exclusive to an inclusive national identity as partly successful, and two even rated it as completely successful. On the Palestinian side, on the other hand, 40 percent of the participants rated the process as not being successful at all.

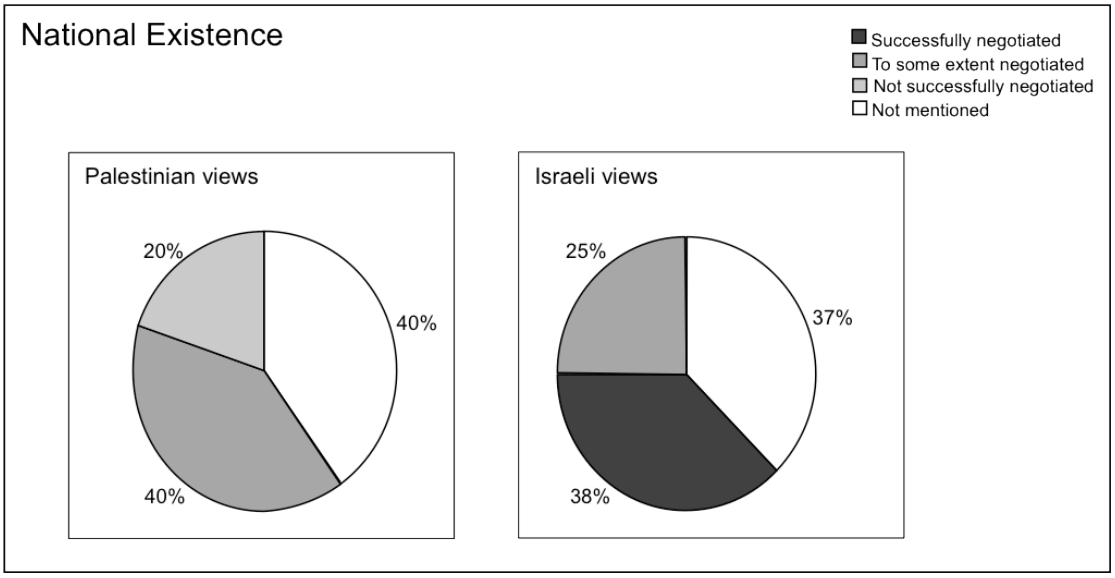
Palestinian views: Some interviewees felt that the discussions reflected the political realities of Israel being the dominant party. One participant said to have felt that the Israeli dominance dictated the solutions that the group was approaching and that the solutions dictated the arguments. The same participant said he had realized that Palestinians had a stronger stand with regard to their own identity than Israelis, who went through a complicated process of identity formation. Other Palestinian interviewees accepted that Israeli security concerns were real and that everyday life security threats were not minimized by the fact that the Israeli state held nuclear weapons.

Israeli views: One participant stressed he had learned that a perceived threat was a real threat and how to communicate about one's fears. Another Israeli participant, who at the time of the interview was a member of the Knesset, said that she was aware of the difficult conditions, which the occupation bore for the Palestinians, and that their point of departure for negotiations was very different. The participant further said she had learned that Palestinians had different policy-making structures and that the Israeli way of proceeding was not the only right way.

National Existence

The majority of both Israelis and Palestinians mentioned the key topic of accepting the other's existence as a discussion topic. From the statements in the interviews, one gains the impression that the acceptance of the other's

existence had become more or less a given and an issue that did not need special attention.

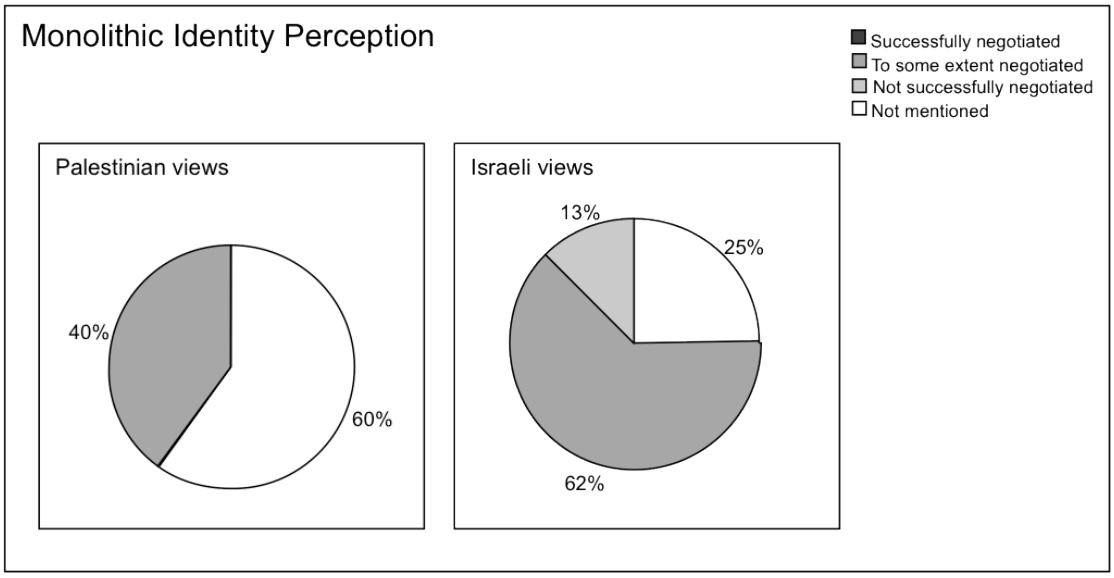


Interviewed participants hence rated the centrality of the topic during workshop discussions not as strongly as the author had interpreted it from following the observers' notes. None of the interviewed Palestinian participants confirmed in their answers explicitly that such acceptance had been negotiated during the workshop sessions in a comprehensive way, only two of them confirmed that acceptance of the other had been negotiated to some extent. On the Israeli side five interviewed participants mentioned the discussion of the topic and three of them felt that acceptance of the other's existence had been successfully negotiated.

Monolithic Identity Perception

From the fact that none of the interviewed participants felt that the monolithic identity perception was successfully or comprehensively overcome, it follows that while participants were able to recognize that their sentimental attachments do not coincide with political attachments, they were unable to

conceive of a two-state-one-country scenario in which the entire land belongs to both peoples and each has sovereignty over part of that land.



Two out of five Palestinians mentioned that the monolithic identity perception had been discussed and found the negotiation process to be partially successful. On the Israeli side six out of eight mentioned the issue and five of them found the discussions to some extent successful.

9 Limitations of the Identity Factor

The identity changes that became visible during the Peace Process have been in the making for a long time and cannot be solely characterized as resulting from the different efforts and instruments applied and employed during the Peace Process. During the process, however, these changes became palpable and were expressed in a more comprehensive and also responsive way. What crystallized at some point in the Peace Process was the realization that it was necessary to negotiate between legitimate national representatives and that it was possible to find those representative negotiation partners on the other side. This realization reflects an alteration in the identity element expressed in moving towards accepting the other's national existence. The exchange of letters of mutual recognition between the PLO and the State of Israel seemed to express the identity change necessary for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The sense that an agreement was necessary evolved out of changes in the political environment in the Middle East, events on the ground and changes in long-term interests and domestic political concerns of the policy makers. The parties' long-term interests built on the consequences of the 1967 War, which brought the Arab-Israeli conflict back to its core, the dispute between Israelis and Palestinians (Kelman, 1997). For the Palestinians the withdrawal of the surrounding Arab states and the grievance over the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza led to a reemergence of Palestinian nationalism, which culminated in the Intifada. The political objective of the uprising had clearly moved away from maximalist positions towards accepting the idea of establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, alongside of Israel.

In Israel the developments divided the polity. According to the nationalist right the occupation of the rest of Palestine presented an opportunity to achieve their ideological dream of a greater Israel. Many other Israelis realized that the objective of incorporating the occupied territories would force them into a dilemma. Israel could either maintain its democratic character by extending citizenship to the Palestinians and lose its Jewish character, or deny citizenship to the Palestinians and thereby jeopardize its democratic stature. The majority of the Israelis, hence, saw the established control over the occupied territories as an opportunity to trade land for peace with the Palestinians and the Arab states. The increasing impact of the Intifada as well as the emerging geopolitical developments turned this opportunity into a pressing option.

The events preceding the beginning of the official peace process had a weakening effect on the PLO and Israel. The loss of former Cold War allegiances and their support of Iraq during the Gulf War left the PLO financially cut off and politically isolated. For Israel the end of the Cold War led to a decrease of their strategic role as a US ally in the Middle East. The situation was further exacerbated during the Gulf war when Israel was excluded from the military alliance against the Kuwaiti invader and was forced to rely on the US for its own defense against missile attacks from Iraq.

In this situation neither party could resist US pressures to enter the negotiations in Madrid, although without commitment. While the Israeli public wanted a peace process their government did not, and while the PLO was eager to negotiate they were not officially admitted to the talks. True commitment to the process only emerged after the election of a new Labor government in Israel with Yitzhak Rabin at its head and after the PLO became an acknowledged negotiation partner through the brokerage of the team in Norway.

The sense of possibility evolved from increased interaction between politically engaged and influential Israelis and Palestinians, which had been active since the 1970s and increased with the start of the Intifada. The mostly unofficial but politically relevant activities, like dialogue groups or economic development projects, opened communication channels and augmented the knowledge each party had of the other. Through those interactions each party learnt that there was a genuine readiness on the other side to make the required concessions and was persuaded that negotiations could lead to an agreement that would not jeopardize their national existence (Kelman, 2005: 13).

Changes in National Identity at the Macro-Level

Some of the identity changes that ensued from the Peace Process have survived until today. The realization among Israelis (and the international community), that the Palestinians are a people, is irreversible; and the conflict parties' mutual acknowledgment of their rights as a people, had an unprecedented impact on their relationship. The changed parameters translated into a legal framework that remains embodied in the Palestinian Authority at least in the West Bank. The Oslo definition of the issues to be discussed in final status talks continue to define the agreed agenda of the government of Israel and the PLO in their political negotiations (Alpher, 2008).

The tenor of Israeli national identity shifted from disregarding the Palestinians' rights as a people to accepting the expression of Palestinian national identity through a Palestinian state. It moved from banning the PLO as a participant in the official talks towards acknowledging them as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and as an official negotiation partner. Recognizing the PLO symbolized Israeli acknowledgement of Palestinian nationhood and the unity of the Palestinian people including those living in the diaspora.

Palestinian national identity had moved from refusing to accept the existence of Israel towards acknowledging the legitimacy of the Israeli state. Palestinians thereby said that they no longer saw Israeli Jews as being only a religious group but also a national community. Palestinian identity perception moved from reclaiming their entire homeland towards accepting a Palestinian state within the area of the Occupied Territories. While these suppositions had been referred to in the 1988 Declaration of the Palestinian National Council in a rather implicit way, the signing of the Declaration of Principles expressed an explicit commitment to those postulations. The commitment further extended to the acceptance of negotiating the parameters of a Palestinian state in a gradual process – which the Palestinians had always been strongly opposed to – even without receiving unequivocal Israeli commitment to the establishment of an independent state.

Yet, these changes did not translate into far-reaching political action. The Israeli recognition of the PLO as the official representative of the Palestinian people did not translate into an acceptance oft the idea that the Palestinians possessed an equal national right to the territories that both peoples claimed. Contrary to the promise of the Peace Process, no subsequent Israeli administration has ended occupation.

The Palestinian recognition of Israel and their acceptance of a two state solution with the implied territorial limitations did not turn into effective state building (Khatib, 2008). The national movement Fatah was not able to consolidate its leadership or contain endemic violence, but lost power to Hamas, who reject the very promise of Oslo.

Subsequent developments led to a gradual reversal of achieved identity changes. The influential Hamas does not accept the existence of Israel and the latter does not agree to negotiate with representatives of the Hamas. This led Israelis to continue to argue that they have no negotiation partner, although on

different grounds than prior to the Peace Process. While they have claimed that there was no legitimate political representation prior to accepting the PLO, they now hold that the Palestinian authority lack leverage to implement an eventual agreement.

Critique of the Oslo Accords and its ensuing agreements has predominantly focused on it origins and motivations. Some critics say that the accords resulted more from a convergence of strategic interests than from a change in the conflict party's relationship (Buchanan, 2000); as well as on their ambiguity and vague structure (Klieman, 2000). Some of the critics find the accords asymmetrical and leading to an institutionalization of Israel's predominance and possibilities to pursue its security objectives at the expense of the Palestinians (Ashrawi, 1995; Said, 1995; Jones, 1999). Others argue that the Oslo Agreements were not an expression of a changed national consciousness (or identity) of the conflict parties but of a continued one that allowed Israel to consolidate its occupation without having to police the Palestinians (Raz-Krakotzkin, 1998; Weinberger, 2006).

The author argues, that one of the macro-level obstacles was that parties were forced to the negotiation table by the negative incentive of a mutually hurting stalemate that made negotiations more attractive than continuation of the conflict. Once at the table, the parties were not ready to negotiate on an equal basis. What was lacking was the positive incentive of mutual reassurance. Israelis and Palestinians both recognized that a negotiated agreement was in their interest, but feared that negotiations may lead to ever more costly concessions that will ultimately jeopardize their security, their national identity and hence their very existence as a people. What would have been necessary to advance negotiations are gestures of mutual reassurance, like acknowledgements, symbolic gestures, or confidence-building measures that directly address the other’s central needs and fears. The initial mutual

recognition of the two sides in the Oslo Accords, which created the breakthrough, needed to be echoed in further gestures of mutual reassurance throughout the ensuing negotiations. Mutual reassurance has occurred during IPS workshops, but not during official negotiations.

Identity Changes at the Micro-Level

The most crucial changes achieved through identity negotiation in problem-solving workshop discussions include – and Kelman confirms that in his interview with the author – that participants began to see themselves as being able to work with representatives from the other side. The complete monolithic view of the opponent has ceased. The "other" is no longer evil, dangerous and stupid but has become a potential partner. Workshop participants discovered that there are people on the other side to whom one can talk and with whom one can work.

In his interview with the author, Kelman also identifies as an irreversible change, the acceptance of the other, at least in the sense that both groups recognize each other as being a people. A change that had emerged slowly through macro-level events like the First Intifada, was further supported by Track Two efforts, and expressed in an Israeli newspaper article that the Palestinians' joy over the Oslo agreements reminded Israelis of what had happened in the Jewish community in Palestine in 1947, when the UN resolution for partition was passed, implicitly calling for a Jewish state. Kelman saw that reaction to be an empathic recognition by Israelis of the Palestinians being a people aiming for a state.

These changes have only occurred in a small percentage of the two constituencies' populations. Some of the workshop participants are experimenting with a new relationship, a relationship that may expand if only to a small circle of people. Nevertheless such small circles can diffuse social

change that may not spread to the entire population, but that can sufficiently expand for the purpose of establishing peaceful and productive relations.

The workshop discussions have contributed to establishing peaceful and productive relations by offering indispensable gestures of mutual reassurance in the form of acknowledgements that confirmed the parties' national narratives. The Israeli acknowledgement that the establishment of Israel constituted a profound injustice to the Palestinian people, even though they accepted only partial responsibility for causing that injustice, acted as a reassurance. The reassuring Israeli gesture was replicated by the Palestinian acknowledgement that Israelis have grown up with a different history than they did. A history that did not conceive of the events in 1948 as an expulsion of Palestinians but rather of an armed combat between Arab inhabitants of Palestine supported by the armies of neighboring Arab states and inhabitants of the Jewish community that resulted in a flight of the Arab inhabitants. Palestinian participants confirmed to believe their Israeli counterparts that some of them did not know any other truth when growing up.

Workshop discussions were able to provide reassuring gestures because they addressed the needs of conflict parties' representatives. By addressing some of the central needs of the participants, the workshop discussions have engendered changes in the relationship between the representatives of the two conflict parties. Nevertheless, the negotiated changes, which the author had traced in the observatory notes of third-party members, have not all been mirrored in the interviews held with the participants of the time. Complete acceptance of the other's existence, the most important identity element accounting for a reconciliation of the two sides, had not been remembered by some of the participants.

Following Kelman's theory of social influence, some of the changes changes negotiated during the studied workshop discussions were induced by

identification and not by internalization. The parameters of the new relationship between workshop participants have not become part of their identity structure – at least not for all of the participants – but remained dependent on external circumstances to remain intact.

This micro-level scenario is mirrored in the macro-level situation of having accepted the other's existence but not yet the implementation of that acceptance. Implementing the acceptance of the other would equal the achievement of a transcendent identity that enables both parties to share ownership of their homeland by each being sovereign over part of their country. The micro-level finding, that the monolithic perception of identity attachment was not completely changed into a transcendent identity perception, reflects the macro-level situation: the two parties were ready to engage in the negotiation of new parameters of their future relationship, but were not able to agree on the definition of the new parameters.

Conditions for Sustainable Identity Changes

The reason why most of the identity changes that developed during the Peace Process did not lead to a comprehensive solution of the conflict stems form the nature of those changes, their origin, quality and consequence. For a changed identity aspect to lead to a reconciliation of the conflict parties, it must be fully integrated into the existing identity structure of the conflict parties. An identity change can only be integrated if it is induced by internalization, that is, if it corresponds to the conflict parties' value system. If a change is induced by compliance to reward or punishment or by identification with an emerging relationship between the conflict parties, it will not withstand the challenges of different social-political circumstances. Only internalization leads to a sustainable identity change that is independent of external influences and can add to a sustainable conflict solution.

Not all changes in the aspects of Israeli and Palestinian national identity that surfaced during the Peace Process were fully integrated into the existing structure of the two peoples' national identity. Some changes were induced by compliance to macro-level forces leading to a settlement of conflict interests. Other changes derived from identification of the conflict parties with the new relationship as pragmatic negotiation partners, which addressed the needs of conflict parties for security and expression of national identity. Although the new relationship between the conflict parties contained an accommodation of the existence of the other within their own identity definition, it did not yield a reconciliation of Israelis and Palestinians because the acceptance of the other's national existence was not integrated into the existing structure of their national identities.

The evaluation of interactive problem-solving workshops by the former participants revealed that lack of integration. Although the former participants confirmed that relevant identity aspects had been addressed and even successfully negotiated to some extent during the workshop discussions, they said that the negotiation process met limits and could not dissolve all remnants of animosity. Old attitudes, like the refusal to accept full responsibility of past actions reflecting the negation of the other, have remained intact although new attitudes associated with the new relationship had taken shape. Palestinian and Israeli participants did not experience the negotiation processes in the same way. While a number of Israeli participants felt that the acceptance of the other's existence had been successfully negotiated, none of the Palestinian participants felt that way.

The coexistence of old endemic and new cooperative attitudes toward the other have created instability in the new relationship and made it vulnerable to the challenges of unresolved conflict issues, which triggered old attitudes to prevail over new ones. The agreements brokered during the Peace Process

were, thus, vulnerable to external influences. The negotiated identity changes did not entirely stand the test of resisting to the challenging consequences of the Oslo agreements. The unclear outline of a two-state solution represented too big a hurdle to reach agreement on territorial issues. Moreover, the virtual institutionalization of Palestinian dependence on Israel in economic, administrative and structural terms resulted in a policy conflict between pursuing Palestinian economic integration and safeguarding Israeli security concerns. The degeneration of the pragmatic partnership ultimately resulted in a reversal of the achieved identity changes.

From the particular example of Identity Factor mechanisms through the application of IPS during the Peace Process, a general conclusion can be drawn about the validity of identity management tools: that they need to generate internalization-induced changes, leading to a sustainable identity negotiation process, and producing new identity structures that last. Only an internalized identity change is independent of external forces and brings about true reconciliation.

The study reveals that a systematic application of identity management tools brings about more sustainable identity changes than macro-level forces. The unofficial and private realm of interactive problem-solving workshops offers a favorable climate for internalized identity changes, as each participant is free to weigh negotiated identity aspects against their individual value system and against the values of their polity, the way they perceive and understand it. At the macro-level of official negotiations the pressures are too high for the development of such a differentiated process.

The statements of the interviewed participants clearly demonstrate, that the most important identity aspect, in terms of attaining a resolution of the conflict and a reconciliation of the two peoples, has changed. Representatives from both communities confirmed that they negotiated an acceptance of the

other's existence and accommodated that acceptance into the definition of their national identity – a perception that was still intact some ten years after the discussion process. Further, former participants integrated a much more differentiated image of the other and learnt that it is possible to negotiate with representatives from the other side and how to phrase their objectives in a way that the other side can understand.

Former participants of interactive problem-solving workshops represent only a minuscule percentage of the two polities. Nevertheless, the cadres of people that integrated changed identity aspects do exist and continuously transfer their changed identity definition to the wider policy-making process. Identity management in the form of interactive problem-solving workshops leads to sustainable identity changes that will be instrumental for the implementation of future conflict resolution and true reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians, once macro-level power-structures allow them to unfold.

ANNEX

Interviews with Workshop Participants and Facilitators

Interview with Yezid Sayigh, Cambridge, UK, 6 June 2002

Yezid Sayigh is a senior associate at the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut. Previously, he was professor of Middle East studies at King's College London. From 1994–2003, he served as assistant director of studies at the Centre of International Studies, Cambridge, and from 1998–2003, he headed the Middle East programme of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. Sayigh was also an advisor and negotiator in the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks with Israel from 1991–1994. Since 1999, he has provided policy and technical consultancy on the permanent status peace talks and on Palestinian reform. Sayigh is the author of numerous publications including: *Armed Struggle and the Search for a State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993* (1997); and *The Middle East and the Cold War* (ed., Oxford, 1997).

What were you doing in your professional life, when you participated in interactive problem-solving workshops?

Until April 1994 I was a research fellow at St. Anthony's College in Oxford, UK, working on developing countries and security. From October 1994 onwards, I was teaching International Politics here in Cambridge, UK.

How did you learn about interactive problem-solving workshops?

Someone of Professor Kelman's group, who told me that they had been meeting for some time, approached me. And I had a feeling that they had a well-set framework. I was approached because by then everyone sort of knew each other and it was not too difficult to quickly identify who had been

involved in Track two initiatives. As I had been doing a lot of such work, I was just a "usual suspect".

How would you describe your personal experience of participating in a problem-solving workshop?

I participated in a workshop that had a different structure [Joint Working Group] than the ones Professor Kelman had held previously, in the sense that they aimed at producing some sort of publishable material. The sort of dialogue groups, that I had participated in before, had not sought explicitly to produce a written draft.

The purpose of the discussions was to support the official process that had agreed on an interim arrangement by suggesting principles for resolving issues concerning settlements, refugees and so on.

I was somewhat of two minds about the effort, partly because there was already a formal negotiation process underway and I was not sure that we in the group were going to do so much better than they were. Particularly for the reason that, when you get to produce a written text, Israelis and Palestinians become much more careful about protecting what they see as their core interest or about properly representing – maybe not themselves – but their broader constituencies. So, you immediately get into a sort of formal negotiating situation, in which you discuss formulas and act like lawyers in a way.

I thought: why do I have to go through two of these negotiation tracks, as I had already been involved in one negotiation track [the official negotiations] and it did not make sense to me to be involved in a second negotiation effort with people, who at the end of the day, had no decision-making power and faced the usual problems of intellectuals, who often act more cautiously than the politicians.

Why did you decide to participate in a problem-solving workshop, despite your two-mindedness about taking part in an official as well as in an unofficial initiative?

Because I did not have a political objection, I just wondered, whether this would have any added value to what was already happening and to what I was already engaged in otherwise. And I was concerned that all the participants would be very cautious and I was also afraid, frankly, that the end goal of producing a published paper of some sort, which was going to be a joint [Israeli-Palestinian] paper while worthy in principle, in practice would result in something that was going to be too general. I was just not convinced that we could come up with anything that would have broken new ground.

And why did you participate nevertheless?

Because Professor Kelman is someone, whom I respect and because there were people there, whom I have regard for; and because I believed it was a worthy cause. I did not attend all the meetings, not because I just did not bother but because I was not able to. After the two years, I did not go back to any further meetings because I had too much on my plate and those meetings were not something that took a high priority at that time.

Did you get any new insights from the workshop meetings?

No, not from these particular meetings; I had been involved in the [official] negotiations from 1991 until 1994 and I had been an advisor and a negotiator and thereby gained immense experience of negotiation in international politics and a better understanding of legal issues, which I had not

been trained for. So I got a lot out of the official negotiations. Also, I had been involved in dialogue groups since 1988, so that by 1994, I knew many Israelis; and I had been to the country, to Israel and Palestine, so I did not really learn anything new or made any significant new acquaintances through the problem-solving workshops. At the time when I came into the group, I had been doing dialogue groups for eight years, I felt that I learnt all that I could from that type of effort and I had given all that I could to it. So, I moved on by going from participating in dialogue groups to being a senior negotiator after Oslo. I thought that new people should be joining the unofficial process.

I think that the psychological approach can achieve very important things, but in 1994, I thought that we were way beyond solving problems at the level of a group of six Palestinians and six Israelis and that there was a much wider context in which the dynamic of the peace process had moved forward and needed to be developed in a much bigger way. I thought the approach was too intellectual and too micro focused, as I tend to be very practical and structured in my thinking.

What possibilities did you see for some of the ideas developed in the workshops to be passed on to the official political process?

In so far as Professor Kelman was able to get a hold of senior people from both sides, people who had gone from being in the opposition to being in the government, for instance, yes those could have some influence. In most of the cases, people, who came to the group, had already made their decisions about their peaceful position; they already knew where they stood. I am not sure anyone changed his or her political view because of the discussions we had. If I think about the people who took part in the discussions on refugees and settlements, they all had already formed their positions and basically

argued their positions. All we really did was demonstrate that we had a good will to talk, as opposed to anything else. I do not think I learnt anything fundamentally new. Some of us – as individuals – had gone on further than the group as a whole in terms of making practical suggestions. Someone like Joseph Alpher, who in some respects one might disagree with fundamentally, came up with the *Alpher Plan*, in 1997, I think it was. It altered how we think about solving the settlement problems and whether one agrees with the underlying approach or not, it has become the basis for how everything is being resolved now. But he did not get that from the group, he brought that to the group. Educationally, it did not really advance me and that was partly why I felt it was time for me to move on, or for the group to move on. I felt that the group, at the time, could not advance, maybe because it was set out to produce a written product and therefore the discussions ended up being very general and we could not do better than the official team. Or if we were to do better, it would have had to be structured in a different way and pursued in a different way.

Interview with Yossi Alpher, Tel Aviv, Israel, 11 November 2002

Yossi Alpher is a writer and consultant on regional strategic issues, and director of the Political Security Domain (PSD), an independent NGO. He has served as director and acting head of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University; as director of the American Jewish Committee's Israel/Middle East Office in Jerusalem; and as a senior official in the Mossad. While at the Jaffee Center, he coordinated and coedited the JCSS research project on options for a Palestinian settlement, and produced "The Alpher Plan" for an Israeli-Palestinian final settlement. Since 1992, he has coordinated several Track II dialogues between Israelis and Arabs. In July 2000 he served as special adviser to the prime minister of Israel, concentrating on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. In late 2001 he published (in Hebrew) And the Wolf Shall Dwell with the Wolf: the Settlers and the Palestinians.

What were you doing in your professional life when you were participating in interactive problem-solving workshops?

I joined the group, when I was about to leave the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University. Then, I moved on to a non-academic position working as a representative of the American-Jewish Committee in Israel and the Middle East.

How would you describe your personal experience of participating in problem-solving workshops? Can you remember concrete moments during which deadlocks in the discussion occurred and how the group dealt with that?

I cannot remember any dramatic moment, where on both sides people would say, ok, we drop our rejections to this and this. It was never like that. I think the best testimony to that was the [Joint Working Group] workshop, during which we drafted the refugee paper and were unable to reach an agreement.

A very interesting confrontation took place during that workshop, when my Palestinian colleague and I presented what was more or less the final draft for the discussions of the following meeting. We had two Palestinian propositions and two Israeli propositions for a solution. Herb Kelman said that we had to merge all of them into one statement to which both sides could agree. My Palestinian colleague and I both said that we were unable to agree. We were both of the view that it was up to politicians and the negotiators to do that job. We saw it as being part of the horse-trading between refugee issues and Israeli settlements that was going on during the official negotiations. We felt that we could not go on any further because it would not have been intellectually honest of us.

This was disappointing for the objective of the workshop group, which intended to engender a process that would lead to an agreed solution. The fact that we refused to come up with a unified solution was the reason that made it possible to get everybody's signature on the document on refugees.

In retrospect, considering that the official negotiators could not solve the refugee problem proved that we were right, not to agree to the statements formulated by the Joint Working Group.

To what extent were you able to introduce ideas that you had gained during the workshops into your professional activities?

My position in the American-Jewish Committee allowed me to continue to participate in the workshops because the Committee knew that it was important for me to keep my engagement in Israeli-Palestinian issues, to take part in these kinds of meetings, and to hear what the other side had to say. I dealt with the same issues on their behalf as well. In that sense my participation in the workshops was useful for my professional activity in the same way as all

the other meetings were, which I continued to have with Palestinians on a Track Two level. I cannot put my finger on anything specific though.

You founded the online Journal bitterlemons[1] together with a Palestinian colleague. Could you explain what bitterlemons is and how its formation came about?

It came about the following way: In the Palestinian team of the [Joint Working Group] was Ghassan Khatib, who is now my partner in bitterlemons. I had met Ghassan previously in different Track Two meetings and I continued to meet with him in other consecutive Track Two meetings. But none of the other meetings were as intensive as the experience in the problem-solving workshops. Ghassan and I developed a healthy friendship at this time, not because we agreed on most issues. We actually often found ourselves involved in discussions, in which there was one Israeli dissenter: myself, and one Palestinian dissenter: Ghassan. We would dissent for different reasons, as we were on opposite sides of a given issue. We were, however, time and again winking at one another, as if we were collaborating in making sure that there were no agreements. So we established a good relationship even though we tended to disagree on quite a lot of things. We had a lot of respect for one another. When I began to develop the idea of bitterlemons about two years ago, I was talking to a number of Palestinian friends about finding a suitable partner for the project. Ghassan read my proposal and agreed with it, so from that moment onwards we became partners, and have consulted on absolutely everything ever since then.

In its whole conception, bitterlemons, as I see it, is a kind of virtual Track Two. It is particularly well adapted to the current crisis: since the start of the Second Intifada it became harder for people to get together. You have to realize, two years ago, I was able to go to Ghassan's house in Ramallah, I could

drive to another Working Group colleague's office in Ramallah, and they could come to Jerusalem whenever they wanted to and we could get together and talk.

Prior to the [Second] Intifada, you could do a Track Two project without the help of a neutral third party, which I consider to be an accomplishment. I actually organized such a meeting funded by the Ford Foundation between Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians. We met in all three places or went abroad. We did not have any outside party providing us with a methodology; we did not need a facilitator. We traded jobs and rotated among those volunteering for them and so on.

Would you say that generating more Track Two initiatives also meets an objective of Interactive Problem Solving?

Exactly, I also know of a number of other examples. There is an Israeli and a Palestinian, who set up an organization ten years ago. Today, however, it is much harder for us to do that. bitterlemons does not have a third party or facilitator and it is virtual, it is not land based. It is a kind of Track Two effort with limitations. The concept did not only grow out of the problem-solving workshops but out of all the Track Two projects that I had been involved in during the last ten years. A fact is that I would not have gotten to know Ghassan, if we had not been working together in the workshops. The method brought us all together in a specific atmosphere and that was crucial.

To what extent was a process of change among the participants recognizable throughout the workshop meetings?

We were all evolving and changing on both sides, without a doubt. The Working Group was, I think, a particularly good vehicle. I consider bitterlemons to be a kind of natural development stemming from that. It is unique in its form; there is nothing else like it. Part of the reason why it works, is a personal aspect, other people might have had a similar idea but could not get the right people together to put it into practice. The Working Group was important in this respect by bringing the right people together.

What you have to understand about ways it is a step forward, in some ways, however, it reflects the fact that we have moved backwards, because we do not even attempt to reach an agreement or consensus on any issue. We consider it an achievement today, if we are able to organize on a weekly basis a civilized exchange of views between Israelis and Palestinians, who do not agree with one another. That is the most we can aspire to, in that sense this is a step back from the atmosphere we had in the Working Group, where the idea was to see how far we could agree on certain issues. There are still people involved in similar efforts, who tend to be more on the left wing fringe. My sense is that they do not reflect any ability to have a widespread effect on people, or leaderships, or the larger public, which is something you were able to do in the late 1980s and the mid 1990s.

When we produced the paper on the refugees, we translated it from English into Hebrew and Arabic and distributed it very widely. When Ehud Barak, in one of his first speeches as Prime Minister in the Knesset, said with regard to the Palestinian refugee issue, that Israel had to show empathy for the Palestinian suffering and had to recognize that Israel forms part of the overall situation even though Israel might not bear responsibility for what happened to the Palestinians, he took the wording directly from us. So you could feel that, here, we had played a role.

Would you qualify this as an example for the fact that achievements of the workshops were transported to the larger political process?

Definitely. I never asked him or got a confirmation of that, but it nevertheless gave us a sense that we were having some influence, that we were ahead of the curve of the policy makers, which is where, as academics, we should be.

With regard to the refugee paper, the wording of which we saw reappearing in Barak's speech, we had hoped that it would get a lot more publicity and attention than it did. At the time, before the commencement of final status negotiations, well before Camp David, the public was not interested in such issues. The public was not yet prepared to deal with these very existential narrative issues that are involved in the refugee question. There had been many more public discussions since Camp David, which had made evident how far we could go and what Arafat's ultimate position was. Camp David also told us that the spirit of the Palestinian side of the document was not the spirit of Arafat. I think we were much closer in representing what Barak ultimately offered than they on their part.

How would you qualify Interactive Problem Solving as a methodology for conflict resolution?

I would compare the method to the efforts of some other facilitators and I must say that Interactive Problem Solving had a much more informed methodology. During the meetings we even had discussions about how to proceed on the basis of the methodology. Nevertheless, I did not feel that the methodology was particularly effective compared to what other people did intuitively. I myself as an Israeli have convened Israeli-Palestinian meetings

acting completely intuitively as I do not have any training in that field. So I never felt that the methodology gave this project any dramatic advantage compared to other Track Two projects.

Do you see possibilities for improving the workshop format?

No, because I think that ultimately the third party of the problem-solving workshops also did a lot of things intuitively. The method reached certain products, not all the products it aimed for but considerable ones. The important thing about the workshop format was not its methodology, I find, but the quality of the people, the intelligent third party members; as well as sufficient funding, time and motivation. The fact that we knew we would meet four times a year gave the effort a lot of weight. We knew that the papers we were working on were an ongoing project that could be continued in a following meeting, if we were unable to finish them in a first attempt.

Interview with a Palestinian Civil Engineer, East Jerusalem, Israel, 12 November 2002

He served as secretary of the Palestinian National Steering Committee in the occupied territories and headed the Engineers Association in the West Bank. He contributed to the formation of a number of leading Palestinian civil society organizations such as the Higher Council of Education and the Arab Thought Forum. He worked on the launch of the Palestinian National Initiative and chaired the Board of Trustees of Bir Zeit University.

How would you describe your personal experience of participating in interactive problem-solving workshops?

The workshops were definitely educational in the sense that I gained more information about different situations; especially, because the Israeli participants were very knowledgeable and closely situated to the decision-making-process in Israel. However, the highly analytical and fruitful discussions that provided me with new insights also reinforced previous convictions that I had. It was very difficult for the [Joint Working] Group to reach an agreement because there are levels that you cannot penetrate. The historic level of the average Israeli is one of them. Even the workshop participants seemed to me to be composed of two levels, a level on which you can conduct discussions and even come to conclusions sometimes, while the other level bears a realm that I cannot comprehend. For example, let me put it like this, when you speak about settlements in the Occupied Territories and you say that, as long as we have to live together, side by side, we need to find a way, by which to establish relations, some of the Israelis understand this while others do not because this would imply to get rid of the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza and this is something they cannot do. They cannot sell this idea to the Israeli public for security reasons.

In a conversation, where a compromise is sought and the intention is to come to a peace agreement, I cannot see a way by which it is possible to give a certain piece of land to the Israelis for the notion of security as being defined by the Israelis. I can understand their need and concern for security – I need security more than they do. On a certain level, Israelis are not able to negotiate a compromise when it comes to security issues. Under these conditions it is impossible to define an independent Palestinian state, if Israelis are not ready to give up control over a defined territory. If we cannot establish control over our boundaries, than we do not have a state.

Some of the Israeli participants had something in the back of their minds, which they were unable to say or they felt they were betraying their cause by speaking about granting an autonomy status to the Palestinians. And I found that it was impossible to go beyond that level during the conversations in workshops.

I think that what the Israelis are looking for is, and I am speaking about the left-wingers, that the Palestinians should have a flag, a passport and autonomy and that is all that they can have. Palestinians in the West Bank are not granted any rights but are tolerated by the Israelis to live there.

How would you qualify interactive problem solving as a method?

The technique is good but it does not help us to go beyond the boundaries that I mentioned. At an advanced stage the method intends to produce papers on refugees on settlements and so on. But there are areas, very hot areas in the conflict, in which you find yourself to be in an awkward position when you have to accept the Israeli views and they most probably have the same feeling when they have to accept our views. For them what happened in 1967, was the continuation of the liberation of Israel, for us it was

occupation. How can you find a way by which to compromise between these two notions? They are totally contradictory!

Does it help to hear how the other side perceives the situation?

Well, we have talked to the other side about how they see things. For example, with regard to the problem of the refugees: there were thoughts mentioned within the discussions, that we do not want all the Palestinians to come back and this is all right, we accept that; but Israelis have to accept their role in that situation, but they said no, it was a result of the war. The Israelis just said that every war produces refugees, and therefore they are not to blame for the Palestinian refugee problem. So they think that they are completely innocent. We asked them for an apology, to say that they were to some extent responsible for the refugee problem. The maximum compromise that we were able to reach was a statement saying that there was a joint responsibility between the Arab states, the Palestinians and the Israelis.

To what extent do you think it is useful to hold discussions with regard to the limit you mentioned?

Generally, it is useful. The method, as developed by Professor Kelman, may be successful in other areas for the resolution of other conflicts. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a very unique situation, where the primary conceptions of each side contradict each other. Some call it the conflict between two rights. In my opinion this is not the case. If we speak about the Israeli right to pray at the Wailing Wall, the saying is correct, but if we are speaking about national rights it is not. It is not a national right that is at stake here, it is a religious right.

I do not think that the technique of interactive problem solving can bridge this gap.

Did you recognize changes that happened among participants between the first meeting and the last one?

Yes, maybe not a change really, but what I found out through the workshops was how Israelis think with regard to certain issues. I knew most of the Israeli participants from before and knew that they are more right wing oriented than moderate. The discussions showed me that they also have liberal ideas. When it comes to the Jewish-Israeli problem vis-à-vis the land, however, their liberalism is left out of the equation. There is just a limit beyond which you cannot go. Liberalism means that I have the right to travel, to medical treatment and so on. When it comes to national rights, they have a very clear position. What has happened in1948 is seen as being normal and in accordance with the UN resolution; what happened in 1967, is seen as being almost normal. It is not seen as consisting of a real occupation, but as being something between occupation and liberation of their land. Changing that perception requires a long timeframe.

I think that even under the present, very tough situations, there are changes taking place in everybody's mind that will be inherited by the new generation, changes that will finally help us to find a solution. If we could come to the understanding that no one needs to be an occupier or needs to be occupied, we could live normally as human beings, keeping our culture and understandings. We have to accept each other's different ways of thinking without trespassing the other's culture and way of life. The Israelis want to establish their way of life in the area. They want to establish a hegemony that is more related to secular perspectives, not religious ones.

The technique of interactive problem solving is wonderful from an academic point of view but it cannot create quick change with regard to these issues.

Interview with Moshe Ma'oz, Jerusalem, Israel, 12 November 2002.

Moshe Ma'oz is Professor Emeritus of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at The Hebrew University, Jerusalem and previous director of the University's Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace. He has been a visiting professor, scholar and fellow at many leading universities and institutions around the world. His scholarly works focus on Middle Eastern politics, with several published in Arabic as well as Hebrew and English. He has served Israel's Knesset as an advisor on Arab Affairs, and was a member of official advisory committees that counselled Prime Ministers' Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin.

What were you doing in your professional life when you participated in interactive problem-solving workshops?

I was a professor for Middle Eastern Studies and Director of the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, here at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. I organized a lot of conferences and workshops. The one with Professor Kelman was the most serious one, because it was ongoing over several years and there were serious people taking part in it.

When did you participate in a problem-solving workshop for the first time?

I think the first time I took part was in 1986, I was at Harvard [University] at the time for a sabbatical and we organized a little workshop with four Palestinians and four Israelis some of them were there for a sabbatical, some came from abroad and we engaged in a discussion about the relation between Palestinians and Israelis. This was the start. The discussion resulted in a sort of joint statement.

How would you describe your experience of participating in problem-solving workshops?

It was very fruitful, very important in terms of getting to know one another and to find some ways to sort out things, and to find ideas for solutions. Especially the discussions we had on refugees, on settlements, and on the future Israeli-Palestinian relationship, were important as their results were published. The system of the workshops [of the Joint Working Group] consisted of plenary group discussions and of sessions in two subgroups, for which one Palestinian and one Israeli would prepare a draft paper beforehand and work on it in their subgroup. In the plenary the two papers were then discussed and amended to eventually form an agreed text out of it.

The only snag was, that none of the governments of the two sides were ready to accept those papers.

How did your perception of the relationship between the two parties change?

It was a gradual change that we went through. As far as I am concerned, that process started a long time before my participation in the workshops. You see, you need people with a certain attitude to take part in such conferences. For example, a right wing Israeli would not accept to participate in such a group because he does not believe in it. Only liberal lefties or scholars are open to participate in these kinds of workshops. Of course, you need some cleavage between the participants to have discussions of some depth.

As far as I am concerned my personal process of change started before I first participated in a workshop. While sitting in the workshops, I think some things became clearer, I saw more deeply into the Palestinian cause and better understood the Palestinian concerns. I also sympathized with them. I was

influenced to a certain extent by the workshops although I had already formed my position. I felt that from all the group members, I was the one, who was closest to the Palestinian point of view. They almost took me for a Palestinian [laughs] because I was sensitive to their grievances. This was due to my profession being a scholar of Islamic and Middle Eastern studies, so I knew the situation better than others. But not all of the participants on the Israeli side were what we call "Arabists".

How would you qualify the impact of the workshops on the wider political process?

On the general public, I am not sure whether there was a big influence, certainly not on decision-makers, nor the government in power. By and large from my experience, it had very little impact on the decision-makers.

With regard to the general public, we published those papers, but again I believe that those publications were not able to convince many people. As those who do not believe it, just ignore it. We planned a number of press conferences but nothing came out of it. Our findings were not implemented at all. We intended to spread the word, and I did, I wrote about it and talked to colleagues and friends. I suppose that some of them learned something and I was able to clarify some points for them. Others who did not like the idea *a priori* just rejected what I said.

It is a very tricky question that you asked, I do not know whether there is an answer to that.

Because it is difficult to trace back the origins of such influences?

Yes, exactly.

Can you remember a concrete situation during the workshops in which the group encountered difficulties or a blockage that could be overcome through a change in perception?

Yes, I think so, that is a good point. I think the positions of the two sides became closer during the workshops as people on both sides learnt more about the other, about their grievances and positions. This process of getting a better understanding of one another was certainly at work. For example, with regard to the issue of refugees the [Joint Working] Group encountered the problem that each side has a baggage of being educated towards adopting a certain position. The Israeli version of the origin of the refugee problem is, that the Arabs just fled; while the Arab version is, that the Israelis expelled them. The truth is both; depending on the circumstances and the area you are talking about. I think this had become clear to both sides during the workshop discussions. It became apparent when the Israeli participants, who had first been opposed to the idea of accepting to deal with the refugee problem, became ready to include the issue in settlement negotiations. Not everyone in the group was happy with that development, though, and our friends criticized us about it.

Another example of a blockage with regard to formulating a statement on the refugee issue was, when it became clear that many Israelis do not understand that Palestinians want Israelis to apologize for the event that created the refugee problem. The Israelis felt very strongly that they did not need to apologize, because *they* did not start the war, the Arabs did. What we, on the Israeli side, were ready to say was that we were sorry and that it is a tragedy. We are willing to help and provide compensation but we cannot apologize for this. The Palestinians were not very happy about that reaction. I suggested thinking about sharing this responsibility, but my own team did not accept that

idea. These are changes that occurred among participants during the workshop discussions.

I saw that change occurring within myself. Initially, I thought: why should we apologize? Then I thought: they have a point because there were cases where we, the Israelis, expelled Palestinians, so we have some responsibility. But the group did not reach an agreement about accepting responsibility. Although, I think there were others, who were willing to accept it.

One of the Israeli participants was a member of the Knesset and he used this idea, this argument, in one of his Knesset debates. He was criticized for it but I still think it was positive for the Palestinians, because it was at least publicly stated.

To answer your question, yes there were some dynamics that changed the positions of the participants on both sides.

How would you qualify the method in general?

I liked the informal character of it and the professional way in which it was organized. I think that the social-psychological basis of the method is very helpful. The weak points of the method, I found, lay in the fact that it is preaching to the converted, in the sense that only people who have a pro-peace attitude would be willing to engage in such a dialogue group; and that it is not very strong in reaching and influencing the decision-makers.

Can you think of a way to improve the method with regard to influencing decision-makers?

That is very difficult. Governments, their agencies and the political parties all have their own agendas, but what we can do is try and give munitions to the parties, who stand for these ideas, usually left wing parties; give them something that they can use. On that level, the method can be improved or be used to reach the decision-making level. And this is what we [the members of the Joint Working Group] actually did, we sent the papers to the Knesset members, whether they used it or not, that is very hard to say. We also aimed at reaching people on a grass-root level, which we did by visiting schools and universities, and by working on projects that would bring people to meet one another, which is a very tall job. To enhance the method's influence we would need more organizations doing that kind of work. The workshop group does not have the capacity to reach a sufficient amount of people that would be necessary to achieve change.

One of my daughters, who also works in conflict resolution, recently conducted a study and found out that only three percent of the Israelis met with Palestinians in such a framework.

Another way of reaching people consists of publishing articles, then again probably only those with an open mind would read material on those subjects, and it is doubtful whether publications can reach those who should be convinced.

So the question remains, even with all those efforts in place, whether one is able to change the mind of the undecided, or at least cast a doubt on those people's beliefs. There are examples of cases, in which it was possible to achieve such changes, look at what happened in the case of the Israeli relations to Egypt when 80% of Israelis were against reaching a solution with Egypt and changed their minds because of Sadat's visit to Israel. Although that was only possible due to a gesture of a strong leader in whom people trusted. The method, of course, does not dispose of such instruments. Then again, it also

worked in the case of the secret Norway Channel, which used similar instruments like those employed by Interactive Problem Solving.

Interview with Gabriel Ben-Dor, Haifa, Israel, 13 November 2002.

Gabriel Ben-Dor is a Fellow of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and Professor of Political Science. He is the former Rector at the University of Haifa and has lectured as Visiting Professor at Universities in Canada.
He has published many books and over one hundred articles on Middle East politics, civic-military relations, conflict resolution, and ethnic politics.
He has served as a Senior Advisor to the Knesset on Defence and Foreign Affairs.

How would you describe your personal experience of participating in interactive problem-solving workshops?

I joined the [Joint Working] Group in 1994 and stayed with it for about five years. We used to meet about four times a year, mostly in Europe and sometimes in the Middle East. We formed sub-committees in order to work on some specific problems of the conflict.

The first meeting in 1994 lasted for eight days. We set up a core group, which was supposed to look at the big issues and the nature of the relationship, and then we would break into sub-groups specializing on specific issues. I though that this was a good procedure, because, first, there was time and patience and second, we were talking about the big things, about the nature of our relationship and where we were going and not about little details of wordings. We worked out a set of principles. Later on, we lost that patience and had shorter meetings, taking just a weekend off from our other engagements.

All the sub-groups were structured in the same way consisting of one Israeli, one Palestinian and one third-party member. We took great care of keeping everything confidential because some participants felt that the effort

would otherwise go astray. We worked very slowly. The group argued about every word in the formulations. By the time we were ready to produce something, it was too late because other people, politicians had worked quicker than we did.

I was unhappy with the fact that in most sessions during the final two years 80 to 90% of the time was spent on arguing about words and formulations, which is more for diplomats concluding a deal than for a group like this with the objective to try and understand the other side.

I am a theoretician myself, so I have some reservations towards the method. I found that the group did not always stick to the original format and its theoretical source stemming from Burton's interactive problem-solving approach. I think that the structure was not very tight. Most of the participants did not know the method and were not interested in its theoretical background; they were interested in making progress on the substance of negotiations. Therefore, the meetings focused less on the methodology and more on establishing continuity and building trust through open and frank discussions.

I was unhappy with the theoretical and methodological part of the workshops, I think it was very loosely structured and far away from the original theoretical assumptions of the people who had formed the method. It became more intuitive. We eventually found that this kind of intuitive approach could not overcome the realities of the situation on the ground, which was becoming very serious.

We made progress on some issues and managed to produce a couple of joint papers. They did not have a major impact, though. We were arguing many times about how to present those papers to make a big splash at the UN. The fact that we did not manage to achieve more impact, or to produce a major publication, disappointed me.

Can you remember concrete moments during which deadlocks in the discussion occurred and how the group dealt with that?

I can give you one example, which is of theoretical importance to me; it was a point that I pushed for very strongly. I pushed for what we call in theoretical terms: linkage. The group worked on five different issues, on refugees, etc. I said that there was no way to make progress that way. In order to achieve progress, each group would have to choose the issue that is most vital to them and gain concessions from the other party on that issue by granting them the same in return. Then each side would be able to compromise. We never really got to that point of integrative bargaining, which you find in negotiations like the ones held in Camp David. Instead, we were bargaining on specifics. We did make some progress that way though. The sessions we had on settlements were quite successful. I found that the Palestinian participant who was working with me was quite forthcoming. Then I found that what he said was not congruent with the view of the other Palestinian participants. When we went back to the plenary session and presented our paper, the other Palestinians did not accept the ideas. The Palestinian participant I had worked with was from England and was far away from his own people. He was thinking in more universal terms, which he found easier to live with. When we took these ideas to the real life situation, they were rejected.

Also, the Israeli participants were not representative of the mainstream, they were far left of centre and we had some arguments within our team. Some of them were really far removed from the Israeli mainstream. What they said was nice and allowed for making compromises and concessions to Palestinians. However, they represented only about two percent of the Israeli public opinion.

What we really needed to do was to compromise, not between the more extreme wings but between the two mainstreams that were not fully

represented. The difficulty that the third party faced was, whether they should choose more participants representing the mainstream of their respective societies and put up with greater difficulties within the discussions; or choose participants, who were more open minded and thought along similar lines and, thus, would be able to agree on some things.

Did your understanding of the other side change during the workshops?

Yes, I think that I learnt to better appreciate the Palestinian point of view, I learnt a lot about the details of their perception. And I think I learnt more about Israel.
I did not experience a revolutionary change. The sessions actually made me more pessimistic. Knowing the Palestinian attitude better, made me more pessimistic because I understood how far they were from us and how far we were from them and how difficult it would be to overcome this gap.

We did manage to overcome some gaps with regard to certain issues, though.

How did your understanding of your own party change during the workshops?

Not very much, I tried to look at myself again, when I returned from the meetings and tried to reflect on how Palestinians saw me, whether I did a good job or whether I should have been more forthcoming, more willing to compromise and so on. But I felt that progress along these lines had been hindered because of the loose structure.

Do you have any suggestions of how to improve the method with regard to these shortcomings?

Sure, I suggest two things. One concerns the structure and the second concerns the choosing of participants. I suggest choosing people representing the mainstream of their society; if that means that the distance between the two groups is large, than this should be accepted as a reality factor. Instead of preaching to the converted, the method should get a real sense of what life out there is like, as a starting point. We failed to do that. I think if we had started with more representative participants and stuck to the structure more strictly, if we had refrained from diplomatic haggling over words and had stuck more to the interactive problem-solving method, we would have made more progress. Or else we would have learned more about why it was not possible to make progress. I think we got side tracked at one point.

Interview with Yuli Tamir, Jerusalem, Israel, 14 June 2004.

Professor Yuli Tamir received a BA in Biology and an MA in Political Science from the Hebrew university of Jerusalem and a PhD in Political Philosophy from Oxford University. She was one of the founders of Peace Now in 1978. From 1989 until 1999, she was a philosophy lecturer at the Tel Aviv University and a research fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute of Jerusalem, as well as at Princeton University and Harvard University. In 1995 she became active in the Labor Party. She was appointed Minister of Immigrant Absorption in 1999, and was a member of the Knesset from 2003 until 2010, as Minister of Absorption, Minister of Education and Minister of Science, Culture and Sport. Today she is the President of the Management Board of the Shenkar College in Ramat Gan.

Why did you decide to participate in an interactive problem-solving workshop?

Because no other channel of communication existed between Israelis and Palestinians, at the time we started working. So, I thought it was a good idea to develop a permanent dialogue.

What I liked about the meetings is their continuity both in terms of participants and in terms of time that they would continue over several years. What I also favored about them was that they were focused on very important aspects of the conflict.

They allowed us to discuss those things and evaluate changes as we were meeting each other time and again, so we were able to evaluate what was happening on the other side.

How often did you participate in a workshop?

I cannot remember exactly but I think about eight times.

What were you doing in your professional life when you were participating in the workshops?

I was active in the civil rights association and was politically active in general.

How did the workshop experience influence your professional activity?

I think, throughout all these years, I gained a lot of insight into what was happening on the Palestinian side and learnt how to evaluate what Israel can offer.

How would you describe your personal experience as a workshop participant?

It allowed me to experience a much closer relationship with some Palestinians knowing them, knowing the way they think, and having a very effective channel of communication. Even now I speak to many of them and I am in very close contact with some of the former Palestinian group members.

How did your conflict perception change?

What changed for me was not so much the perception of the conflict but of a future agreement of what could be achieved, what kind of agreement is achievable and who the partners are within the Palestinian camp to talk to.

Did your perception of the other side change?

Yes, the more I understood about their situation, the more it changed.

How did the perception of yourself and the Israeli side overall change?

I think, I became more sensitive towards the dynamics and the way we raise some issues in contrast to the way the Palestinians illuminated some of the aspects of the dialogue.

Can you remember a concrete moment during the workshop discussions when such change occurred?

For me, the most significant moment during the workshops was, when we had a very fierce debate about the right of return and it looked as if we reached a complete standstill, and than after a long period of tension, one of my Israeli colleagues stood up and said to the Palestinians, that this had been a very difficult moment for all of us and that the Israelis were aware of what the Palestinians had been going through. The Israeli participant addressed especially one of the Palestinian participants, who had been imprisoned for many years, and said that the group appreciated that this Palestinian participant took part in the dialogues and that the dedication of this participation was very moving for all members of the group.

By saying that, my Israeli colleague opened up a new kind of dialogue, but it also taught me a lesson about the inequality of the point of departure for these dialogues of each side. We both come and we negotiate and we go back home. They go back home but they go back to a situation of occupation where they have to face very difficult conditions. It was a very important lesson for me, to understand that their background is so different from ours.

Did you feel that there was an asymmetry in power and possibilities?

Exactly.

To what extent were you able to use some of the ideas that were developed during the workshops in your professional activities?

I think we were in Austria together the day we heard about the Oslo Agreement. It was very interesting for all of us to learn this fact while sitting together and discuss it. It was a very interesting moment to see how the group reacted to the fact that there is an agreement and that it was in a way very similar to what we had in mind.

Did you feel you were somehow part of this process that led to the Oslo agreements because you were thinking along these lines?

Right.

Do you have any final comments about the nature of the method?

I think the important thing, as I said, is its continuity. Because we met so many times we got to know each other and became friends; that was the most important part. Also, the composition of the group was a good one because it contained intellectuals situated on the left; at that time not many people from the right were ready to meet Palestinians.

My critique would be that the talks should have been even more structured.

Interview with Ze'ev Shiff, Tel Aviv, Israel, 15 June 2004.

Ze'ev Shiff, the late Israeli defence analyst, wrote numerous books, including *Israel's Lebanon War* and *Intifada*. He also served as a military correspondent in Vietnam, the Soviet Union, Cyprus and Ethiopia. He joined the *Haaretz* in 1955 and became senior associate of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in 1984. He was the chairman of the Military Writers Association, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and an Isaac and Mildred Brochstein Fellow in Peace and Security at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University. Schiff won several prizes, including the Sokolov Journalism Prize, the Amos Lev Prize, and the Sarah Reichenstein Prize. He died in 2007 at the age of 74.

What were you doing in your professional life when you participated in interactive problem-solving workshops?

I worked as a journalist.

Why did you decide to participate in a problem-solving workshop?

Yesterday evening, when we were listening to a number of lecturers [at the Track Two Diplomacy Conference at Tel Aviv University] I took notes for myself to find out in how many of such dialogue groups I have participated during my career. Herb Kelman's group is unique in many aspects. It is not the only one that is good but I would say that there were only about two or three kinds of dialogue groups, which I found good.

Something that was not mentioned at all by the speakers yesterday concerning the role of Track Two, and something that was not included in the list of all the things that can be achieved through Track Two efforts, is something that Herb Kelman managed to do, maybe not intentionally, but it was contained in the outcome of the workshops. The IPS workshop meetings

became sort of a school, an unbelievable school, for negotiators. This became apparent when many workshop participants became engaged in the official negotiations in the 1990s. This was particularly the case for a number of Palestinians, who became actual negotiators in the official talks, and also for some Israelis, who acted as advisors and members of the official delegations. This was an unbelievable development.

Later on this created a problem, because some of them said: "listen I am really sorry, things which I have said yesterday, I cannot do anymore, because I became sort of an official". So some of them left the group, although nothing that was discussed in the group would leak to the outside. It was an excellent unbelievable group, consisting of people, some of whom had not wanted to engage in talks let alone in negotiations, who - all of a sudden - started listening to each other. Palestinian group members began to understand what the red line was for us Israelis and the same was true for us towards the other side. This is something that was unique about the problem-solving workshops.

Herb Kelman was a pioneer in organizing a Track Two initiative and thereby created a sort of school for negotiators or for developing diplomatic skills and that is something that was not mentioned by any of the lecturers yesterday.

Secondly, what stood out about herb Kelman's workshops was their seriousness. Professor Kelman did not always intervene, when there were problems in the workshop group. Other groups I participated in were faster in producing things and publishing them. Herb Kelman, on the other hand, was slow; he was digging in deeper and deeper. The written results came later, just very slowly. If you look at the documents, which were produced, the seriousness and the thoroughness of the endeavor becomes apparent. Herb Kelman's dialogue groups therefore were the most serious ones for me, as he was digging so deep and because he was usually very careful not to interfere,

although we encountered real problems and we wanted to stop because we had reached a dead end, especially with regard to questions about the refugee problem. But if you read the paper we produced on the refugee problem, I think it's content is unique, particularly with regard to one aspect. It was not welcomed, by the way, by some of my colleagues here in Israel. But the paper was the only occasion when we found a formula of how to deal with the sensitive narratives of both sides. If you read the paragraph on the refugee issue you will see that both sides understood – although we did not go into any numbers – but we dealt with the narratives, which is tremendously important.

We reached a sort of a formula in which we did not blame each other we just spoke of the results of this war. It was not a question of blaming the Israelis who expelled the Palestinians, or blaming the Arabs that they aimed in any case to destroy the Jewish state. We spoke about the flight of Palestinian refugees and it was clear to us that all of us were responsible not just one; we did not blame each other. Professor Kelman was enormously helpful in bringing that result about.

Professor Kelman was not scared to touch on such sensitive issues. He understood the importance about each side's narratives concerning the refugee issue. It was clear to him, that neither the Palestinians, nor the Israelis, no Palestinian leader and no Israeli leader, could accept the other side's claim; nor could they deny or give up the right of return. It was something that neither side was able to do at that stage. I personally changed my views as well.

Because of your participation in the workshops?

No, no, do not misunderstand me. Because of the workshops I became much more open to their [Palestinian] identity. I had no problem to acknowledge the fact that they are here and what the war had brought about. I

understood how important their ties [to the land] were, just as important as ours. I understood their identity; I understood their deep connection to this place. Although, when I thought about the concrete numbers of refugees, I came to the conclusion that every Palestinian no matter what, no matter where, no matter whether he is a millionaire in Detroit, he continues to see himself as a refugee. Every Palestinian considers himself as a refugee and they will never give that up. This leads to a scary number. The change that I underwent was, that I learnt to understand the meaning of what they were saying.

What I was referring to is a change that is not related to the workshop experience. This change came about because of the last uprising, the Second Intifada and the bloodshed. I decided that no matter what, I did not want to absorb any more Palestinian refugees. For the Israeli Arabs, who are here I am ready to do everything that they gain access to all the rights. But I am not going to give the key to others, no matter what.

What other changes about how you perceive the Palestinians or you own side did you experience during the workshops?

I better understood that there was a perceived threat [on the Palestinian side], and I better understood how to explain our perception of threat to the Palestinian side, and I better understood the meaning of occupation, the Israeli occupation.

How the Palestinians perceive the situation?

Yes. My understanding changed not only through my participation in problem-solving workshops but also through experiences gained in other dialogue groups. For example, in one group we discussed the issue of

roadblocks with regard to security. I suggested that we should create a committee, which would deal with the essentials. For example, a committee of doctors in order to help sick and elderly people and create a situation, in which we would become able to deal with real problems. I said that I could organize a discussion with doctors, willing to form such a committee, to work out the necessary details. I was shocked by a very interesting reaction, the Palestinians living in the territories supported me immediately, Palestinians living in Jordan or abroad, however, said no to the idea, finding it not important. No solution could be reached.

Interview with Harold Saunders, Tel Aviv, Israel, 16 June 2004.

Harold Saunders received a Ph.D. in political history at Yale University in 1955, before joining the U.S. Air Force and then the CIA as an analyst. He joined the National Security Council staff of the Kennedy administration in 1961. From 1973 to 1975 he worked with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger on scores of Mideast missions. He was the United States Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs between 1978 and 1981. He is director of international affairs at the Kettering Foundation and the Founder and President of the International Institute for Sustained Dialogue. He co-chaired the Dartmouth Conference Task Force. Harold Saunders is the author of *A Public Peace Process: Sustained Dialogue to Transform Racial and Ethnic Conflicts* as well as *Politics Is about Relationship: A Blueprint for the Citizens' Century*.

You were a member of the third party for the Continuing Workshop. Why did you decide to participate in the workshops?

The motivation to participate in the meetings held in Cambridge, USA, was that, in the early 1980s, there was a strong feeling that it was important for each side to recognize, what the deepest fears of the other side were, and then to think about what they could do to reduce the fear concerning one particular point. There was a general objective that if each side would write something, stating the new position they were able to take with regard to a particular point, it would most effectively reduce the fear of the other side.

I think each party tried to write a paragraph or two, which was then presented to the other side so that they could respond to it. The objective was to find participants on each side, who could publish those statements in a media that would reach their respective constituency, like in a newspaper editorial, for example. The idea was to start a series of such articles, stating the position of one side and then the response to it from the other side. Thereby, the changes

reached within a workshop meeting would have had the potential of producing actions outside of the meeting.

According to you, what is the aim of problem-solving workshops?

To find out how participants change within a workshop and how that change demonstrates what is required to change the relationship of the conflict parties or at least the relationship of the representatives of the conflict parties, who participate in a problem-solving workshop. The purpose of the workshops is to find out, what causes people to change their perception.

I often say, that the purpose of my dialogue groups is first, to change the relationships of the participants and to enable them to learn what it would cost them to change the relationship with the other, what they would have to give up in terms of their convictions about the other, to say I was wrong, my perception was wrong, and which familiar perception do I have to give up. The second purpose is to change the larger party politic of which the participants are a part.

When I chaired a meeting between representatives from Armenia-Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh, I remember starting a meeting by saying to one side: what do you need from the other side in order to do what you need to do, what do you need to persuade your fellow Armenians? In response I got a lecture on the history of the Armenian-Turkish genocide; I got a lecture on the history of the Armenian people and so on. At three o'clock in the afternoon, one of my American colleagues said: look, at 9 o'clock Harold Saunders asked you a question that you managed to avoid for six hours, why can't you answer that question?

They were not able to answer that question because it was too painful.

Because that question referred to their deepest fears?

Yes, and because they would have to acknowledge that fear, admit to it and describe their weaknesses.

If people can learn in a workshop what they have to give up, that is a learning that they can take out of the room and transfer to their constituency. If they learn in the workshop what it requires to introduce such change out there, that new insight can be transferred. This is conceivable to do if you are an editor of a newspaper writing an editorial that addresses that change; if you are a politician it is more difficult.

Problem-solving workshops offer a realm in which one can discover the deepest roots of conflict and how these can be addressed. I always thought of Herb as a social scientist, as a scholar, with the primary interest of bringing people together for the purpose of revealing, to the groups sitting across the table from each other, the deeper roots of conflict.

How can you demonstrate that the workshops set a process in motion that reveals underlying conflict causes and that helps to transfer this new insight to the constituencies of the participants?

If it is possible in the course of a workshop to say that people change their assumptions about what is really at issue in a given conflict, there is a bit of knowledge produced that demonstrates what the assumptions about the nature of a conflict really are. That in itself has a potential to impact on the wider public and body politic.

You do not have to demonstrate that the pro-peace participants taught the Israeli and Palestinian bodies politic that this or that is the cause of the conflict, you do not have to demonstrate that connection.

Because it is obvious, that ideas travel?

Yes. But you do have to do something to make ideas travel. For example, Shimon Shamir's invitation to the Track Two Conference said that his motivation for organizing the conference was to insert the idea of Track Two into the Israeli discourse of the conflict. In other words, reach wider acceptance of Track Two work as a legitimate way of addressing conflict issues. After the conference he said to me that he got a lot of positive feed-back and felt that the conference contributed to broadening the acceptance of Track Two and to making it a part of Israeli thinking about the conflict, which it was not two years ago. This actually surprises me, because Track Two efforts have been going on for 33 years and after the Oslo Accords, you would have thought that the idea of Track Two would have become part of the vocabulary.

Interview with an Israeli MD, Tel Aviv, Israel, 18 June 2004.

A medical Doctor and a career officer in the IDF until 1987, he was Minister of Health from 1993 until 1996 and Deputy Minister of Defense from 1999 until 2001, before he took office as Minister of Transportation from March 2001 until October 2002. He left the Knesset until 2006, when he was again appointed as the Deputy Minister of Defence until June 2007. In May 2008 he left the Labor party and established a new party *Israel Hazaka* (a strong Israel). He has published two books and many articles that appeared for example in the New York Times. He is currently the Chairman of S. Daniel Abraham Center for Strategic Dialogue in Netanya Academic College.

Why did you decide to participate in an interactive problem-solving workshop?

I have to refer to my professional background. I was assigned Governor of the West Bank in January 1988, serving my last post as a military official. I was considered as one of those Israelis who understand the Palestinian situation. I have to say that my service as the Governor of the West Bank convinced me that Israeli-Palestinian peace is necessary – not unavoidable – necessary. Then, I joined the Labor Party where I was again considered as someone who knows the matter quite well. In 1988, Rabin and Perez sent me to negotiate with the Palestinians. When I had an opportunity under the auspices of Professor Kelman to become engaged in a dialogue with Palestinians, who are also in favor of dialogue and peace, I was very glad to accept it. You remember at the beginning of the Intifada people were quite desperate and scared about what was going on.

How would you describe your experience of participating in the workshops?

For me, and I think for other participants as well, the participation in the workshop was important because it was a very good way to learn what the other side feels in a very direct and intimate way.

You know the discussions were quite lengthy, it took time and we were not under pressure of time. We were sitting together and talked for hours and I think this helped everybody on both sides. This was the main value of the workshop to generate understanding of the other side, for them and for us.

How did your perception of the other side change?

I did not lack knowledge at that time of what was going on, but I had some decisive conversations that generated a better understanding of what was going on inside the Palestinian community.

You mean you gained better understanding of what influenced the Palestinian perspective?

Exactly, about the inner side of their politics.

Was that also the case in terms of your own community, did your understanding of the Israeli view also change?

Yes, it was important for both sides in the same way.

To what extent were you able to gain new ideas from the workshop discussions that influenced your social-political activities?

Maybe not concrete new ideas, but it was important to have this experience, to have a permanent dialogue.

Did your increased understanding of the other influence how you approached matters after your participation in the workshops?

Yes exactly.

To what extent did you experience concrete changes of perception during the workshop discussions?

I do not remember historical turning points in the workshop.

There were no decision-makers among the Palestinians. At that time, they were not yet at that point. Many of them would just repeat the general Palestinian rhetoric. But since they were very eloquent and very candid, it gave us confidence. Later on, however, many of the participants on the Palestinian side became prominent members of the Palestinian establishment.

How would you qualify the method in general?

It is always important to talk.

At the time when we had the official dialogues with the Palestinians, the so-called "momentum" type of dialogue [that is achieved in workshops] was not so needed. The time when that kind of dialogue is needed is in times when there is no dialogue between the two sides, like now.

I just recently participated half a day in a workshop Professor Kelman organized in Jerusalem. And again I found it very useful and learnt something new.

Interview with a Palestinian Architect and Author, Frankfurt, Germany, 10 October 2004.

An author and architect, she founded, in 1991 the Riwaq Centre for Architectural Conservation, the first of its kind to work on the rehabilitation and protection of architectural heritage in Palestine. From 1991 to 1993 she was a member of a Palestinian peace delegation in Washington D.C. She is engaged in some major peace initiatives of Palestinian and Israeli women. In 2006, she was appointed as a vice-chairperson of the Board of Trustees of Birzeit University. Her publications include, "Sharon and My Mother-in-Law: Ramallah Diaries", which was awarded in 2004 the prestigious Viareggio Prize in Italy, and „Nothing to Lose but Your Life: An 18-Hour Journey with Murad".

What were you doing in your professional life at the beginning of the 1990s?

In 1990 I was teaching at Birzeit University most of my time. But let me go back two more years, as my activities at that time are relevant to our topic. In 1988, I participated in a woman's conference where Israeli and Palestinian women came together and a real network resulted from that encounter. We would continue to meet and discuss conflict issues. That was a very important experience for me, because, as a Palestinian, you know that the Israelis are the ones who are of a stronger mentally, they are the ones who are the occupier, they are the ones with the big arms and with the airplanes. So you always have this image of the Israelis as being very strong. While on the Palestinian side you do not have weapons etc. Through these meetings with Israeli women, I realized that Israelis perceive the situation in an opposite way on the psychological level and this was for me very important. I realized that there is a lot of insecurity among the Israelis and also a lot of fear, real fear. From a Palestinian viewpoint this fear may seem to be ridiculous because they have the strongest military power. So for me it was essential to realize that having a

strong army does not give you security, internal security [psychological security]. I think that Palestinians have a lot of security inside. It was so interesting for me to see that the psychological equation is just the opposite of the military equation. It also told me that I have to take the fear or concerns of Israelis seriously. At the very beginning it looked so ridiculous to me that Israelis would ask Palestinians to give them security. How could we give them security, at a time, when we only had stones and knifes? Israelis telling us that they wanted to collect our knifes, sounded absurd to me.

In the 1990s the situation was still the same. When the meetings with Herb Kelman started, it was a continuation for me of what I had been doing in the framework of the women's meetings. In the 1990s I also started RIWAQ[2] and, in 1991 I was very interested in the protection of cultural heritage.

Then Madrid happened. I did not go to the first meeting there. I only participated in the second round of the talks in Washington. I received a telephone call from a PLO member in Tunis telling me that I should participate as a delegate of the Palestinian team taking part in the official negotiations. At fist I thought why me? And it took me a while to come to a decision. I was very scared and very much taken by surprise because the negotiation team had been formed some months before, and I never expected to become part of it. Also, the negotiation team was based on political activists. I have always been active and I have always been close to the democratic front but I have never been a member of the PLO. In all my life, however, my political activism never took priority over my professional life. I was always more concerned about my profession as an architect or as a teacher, then about any kind of political activities. All the other participants did just the opposite; they had all abandoned their profession for a political career.

Only after a good friend of mine told me that this was a once-in-a-lifetime experience and that I should be honored to having been chosen as a

participant. I accepted, also, because I was the only woman of the negotiation team. There were other women involved but because they were from East Jerusalem the Israelis did not allow them to enter official negotiations in the state department. So I was the only woman participating in the negotiations, on both sides by the way, the Israelis did not have a woman negotiator either. Only at a latter stage, I think the Israelis once brought in a woman consultant. Also on the Palestinian side a female workshop participant was brought in later on.

When Oslo happened, I was sure that I wanted to go back to University and teach and continue my work on RIWAQ, but then, I conceded to work for the ministry of culture, without being a deputy. I worked there for 18 months. At the beginning it was great fun to find a building that we could rent, buying furniture and lamps, setting up the structure of the departments and hiring people. Then all of a sudden I was overwhelmed with all the new appointees. Looking back now, I find myself very naïve and immature. Most of the appointments were political; people who had been activists of the PLO and who had to be absorbed one way or another. At that time this caused me a lot of frustration because I did not know whom to trust. So after 18 months I resigned and went back to RIWAQ.

Why exactly did you decide to participate in problem-solving workshops in addition to the fact that it was a logical consequence after your participation in the women's meetings?

I have always believed in that kind of work and that it is extremely important to talk to Israelis. Also, I believe that the Israelis have big problems within their own society.

In the case of Herb Kelman's workshops, you have to recall that what I tell you is what I think now, not what I thought then; it is very difficult for me to recall what I thought at that particular moment.

There are two main reasons why I participated in Herb Kelman's workshops. First, because it seemed to me that this effort could eventually lead to the recognition of the PLO. At the time there were many meetings between Israelis and Palestinians who were active in the PLO, without the PLO being a recognized political organization. The workshops were something that the PLO knew about, although there was no direct contact with the PLO. In addition, the Israelis [influential Israelis who participated in the workshop] were ok with that. It was most important to me that people from the Israeli side were willing to meet with PLO representatives.

Second, it was important to me that some of my friends participated as well, which meant that I was familiar with the people going there.

How did you feel when you first participated in the workshops?

I was not scared, I hardly find myself in situations that scare me [laughs]. But I was and am still very frustrated with many of the arguments because I expected different things from people who are willing to come and meet Palestinians even Palestinians associated with the PLO. There are only very few Israelis I am not frustrated with. I assumed a lot about them [the Israeli participants] and I felt that every Israeli held a conflict perception that was so persistent and strong. I think they all went to the same school, you know what I mean?

So for me it was frustrating to see people from the Israeli side, who I thought were ready for a two state solution but were of course all Zionists. In a bigger framework you could feel that people were ready for a two state

solution. But for me it was always very hard to find that the Israelis were not willing to face one reality, of what happened to the Palestinians.

Which reality are you referring to?

Israelis keep on saying that the creation of the Jewish state in Palestine had not affected the Arab inhabitants; but how could you create a Jewish state in a place that is Arab and not affect them? How can I go to India and say I want to have an Arab state but the Indians will not be affected. For me this is a psychological issue that does not necessarily have to have implications on the type of solution. It is like the right of return. I cannot see how Israel could insist on having no responsibility on that. It is ok for Jordan to absorb Palestinians, as it is for Syria, Lebanon, Sweden and the rest of the world, it is ok for them to assume responsibility but not for the Israelis.

How would you describe the experience of your participation in the workshops?

During the workshops I felt that the Israeli mentality of being powerful dictated the kind of solution we were approaching and the solution dictated the arguments. Maybe the participants on the Israeli side were more politically and more military oriented. While on the Palestinian side the participants were more intellectual and grass-root oriented, people to whom values like justice mean a lot.

So for me it was educational but I was always frustrated with the kind of answers I got. And I remember one time when we were discussing the right of return, which is such an intense issue for me, the situation became so difficult that I had to leave the room, I could not take it, you know.

I remember one of the Israelis telling me: "you know Suad, I never, never understood how difficult this issue is for Palestinians until you cried."

I felt that the whole issue of the right of return was something they were so insensitive about. [Starts crying] saying: that happens to me all the time. When I give a speech and I talk about an olive tree, I might start crying. And people ask me: "are you crying?" I say: "yes". They go on: "are you crying over the olive tree?" I say: "yes". [We both laugh]

I guess that you are moved by what you associate with the olive tree?

Yes. That is exactly what happened during one of the workshops. I think that of all the discussions we had, the most difficult one was the one about the right of return. There were a lot of emotions involved in that discussion. So what else did you want to ask me?

How did your perception of the Israelis change during the workshops?

It changed a lot. I think that both of us influenced one another. Even if you sit there and argue against something, at the end of the day you go on and you reflect on it. To me it was very important that there were moments, when I thought that they got affected by what we said and vice versa.

Most importantly, all of us have our own narrative and we strongly believe in our narrative. Then we listened to the others' narrative and some of it, we accepted as a fact. We did not have to approve of it nor adopt it but we learnt how to understand it. I think for me the most important thing was, that most of the people who were there, I think were Ashkenazi, were Europeans. An Arab can never understand the Holocaust. It is not part of our history of our thinking it is just not there.

In Israel the Holocaust is so present and I always said: I have nothing to do with the Holocaust. Why should I be bothered with this? But all of a sudden I realized that I was dealing with Europeans who were victims of that historic moment and you just cannot escape that. If I say I have nothing to do with that, it does not for that matter become the end of the story.

Also there are a number of issues that I always had difficulties with and that remain difficult for me, which are mostly lines of thinking. For example, the Jews being a nation not a religion, these are basic differences. For me Islam, Christianity and Judaism are religions and people who belong to these religions are from different cultures. So what do you do if a religious community decides that they are a culture? I am not convinced about that, I think that the Moslem fundamentalists do the same thing; they say that they are a Muslim nation and I do not agree with the Muslims saying that. But when you are faced with someone who strongly claims that this is what they believe, you have to take it as a given and deal with it as a given. So when you are speaking with Israelis about some of these issues at the end of the day I tell myself that this is what they feel and you have to respect that feeling and go with it, without having to be convinced about it.

When the Israelis talk about something that happened 2000 years ago, I cannot take it seriously because when the refugees are concerned they cannot remember anything. What will happen if Arabs start remembering things that happened 2000 years ago? I really have an unbelievable amount of difficulty with trying to conceive what Zionism is all about. But I take it as a given, one two three four, this is how they see it and I have to take it from there and go on. I think that is what I learnt from the workshops because every one participating in it felt so strongly about this. I decided that, while I will never be a Zionist by understanding, it is very simple for me to understand the Jewish feeling of insecurity, of what happened in Europe during the Second World War. This is

all very easy for me to understand on a psychological level and to be very sympathetic to it. But it is not easy for me to go with the ideology of what came after that. It is of two completely different sets of issues to me. I accept that these two are connected and that this is how they see the world and if you want to come to a solution in the end, you go along with that story.

With regard to the narrative of what the Israelis did to the Palestinians, I once said during a workshop session: listen, recognition is very important for the Palestinians. If I was an Israeli or a Zionist and I would want to make peace with Palestinians I would stand up and say: I am sorry for everything we did to you, we kicked you out of this land, we destroyed your villages, but now we want to make peace with you, please forgive us!

I would do this if I were an Israeli and it would not change anything with regard to the solution: it would not mean that the Israelis would have to give us more land, or more of Jerusalem, or that we would be given the right to absorb more Palestinian refugees.

Basically what I was trying to say then [during the workshops] was, that you Israelis never want to face what you did to us in 1948. To tell me we lost a war, so what?

Then one of them said: "Suad what do you want? You want us to say that Israel was born in sin"? I answered: "exactly, exactly". But being born in sin does not mean you do not have the right to live, or to education, to a good marriage and nice children, to a good life. But you were born in sin as far as the Palestinians are concerned.

The beautiful thing of this situation was that it was my Israeli counterpart who formulated that for me. He went on saying that it was very difficult for them as well. I think that there are certain limits for the Israelis, if you trespass them the whole dialogue collapses.

So the psychological, or should I say the existentialist, dimension of the workshops was very important for me. Of course you discuss the borders, Jerusalem and security but accepting one another was the most difficult part in all of these dialogues. The underlying tension, anxiety or frustration was mostly based on what both of us thought had happened to us in 1948 and what we were ready to acknowledge or not acknowledge or give excuses for. Of course the Israeli version always blames it on bad political leaders who did not advise them properly and part of this is true. I think the Arabs refusing to accept the 1948 partition was a terrible mistake looking at it from my perspective today. But these were not the reasons that made us refugees. It was a bigger theme of what happened in this land. Once you say you want to have a Jewish state, it causes a lot of consequences.

For me accepting the other narrative means to say: yes, I did that to you. And this has nothing to do with [achieving] a political solution. The Israelis, on the other hand, always feel that if they acknowledge something like that, it evokes paying a price. I think because there were more politicians and more influential people on the Israeli side, it was more difficult for them to admit something like that. A politician cannot say yes to something without also saying yes to the absorbing of refugees. On the Palestinian side we were more intellectuals while on the Israeli side there were more functionalists.

How did your perception of your own community change during the workshops?

I do not think that it changed, because you know, you have Palestinians living in Diaspora and Palestinians living in the West Bank. As a refugee person from Jaffa and a Diaspora person who participated as a representative of

the Palestinian public from the inside [Occupied Territories], no I do not think that my perception of the Palestinian community changed.

Maybe you could elaborate a bit on what you are getting at with that question?

The question is directed at finding out how the workshop participation influenced your own identity perception in terms of accepting the other party without feeling threatened.

No, I do not think so, but I can tell you one thing: I mentioned before that I found out that we Palestinians have a sort of an inner strength and an inner peace when it comes to know who we are and what we are. I think that the Israelis went trough a process of identity [formation], which is much more complicated than ours. After all they have been through, they decided to become a nation they are, thus, a nation in formation. They are in a more difficult situation when it comes to answer the question about who they are and what they want to be.

How did your perception of the conflict change?

One change that occurred was that I realized, that you cannot impose a solution, you have to reach an agreement on things. The most important thing for me was to understand that you have to work things out with one another. We cannot force anything on them, they cannot force something on us, because that will not be a lasting resolution of the conflict. I think that the Israelis have not quite come to terms with that. If they want a real solution, it has to be fair, they have to be generous. They would have to give the Palestinians what they ask for and they would also get what they want and be safe. If you want to

work it out with the Israelis by talking, by making them understand who you are and by understanding each other's narrative, you may fall short because they always ask for a little bit more in return for what they are ready to give. Even though we went a long way in the workshops, the equation remained that we had to accept what they were ready to give us instead of being able to obtain from them what we asked for.

On the one hand I felt that the discussions initiated a process that changed both sides. It made the Palestinians more realistic. When I talk to other Palestinians, I feel that there are two levels, the mental level of wanting a solution, of wanting peace, of wanting to divide the land; and the existentialist level on which Palestinians feel that they belong to Jaffa and that the Israelis have to apologize for taking that away from them, there is a lot of psychology involved in bridging that gap.

On the other hand, I felt that during the workshops we were not able to close that gap.

To what extent did you develop trust in being able to bridge this gap eventually?

The trust was building slowly but I would say certainly. A lot of fears and misunderstandings were dissipated by hearing the other's narrative. Understanding one another diminishes misconceptions, and that in it self generates a feeling of confidence. A lot of fears and exaggerated images like Arabs wanting to throw Israelis in the sea or the Israelis wanting to kick us out of the West Bank become silly when you are ready to sit down and talk together. Because you realize that deep down both peoples want to find a solution. When you realize that the person in front of you wants to find a solution, then a lot of the misconceptions go away. Even if it is not outspoken,

such a process builds confidence to tackle important issues. All members of the group were ready to discuss difficult issues.

I remember a discussion about the right of return when an Israeli asked me: how can I trust you that you do not claim back your house in Jaffa? I answered that on an emotional level I want to go back to my father's house, but what I feel is one thing, on a rational level, I realize that I have to give up on that idea. What is important for me, is for you to acknowledge, that I am able to give up on that claim, and thank me for that. You have to acknowledge that I paid a heavy prize and that I went a long way in order to get to this point, where I am ready to give up on such a claim.

When you negotiate in such a way, that you touch on all the wounds and hear how everybody has been hurt and then look at how you can cure it, it builds confidence and trust in a very strong way.

To what extent were you able to use ideas developed during the workshops in your social-political life?

When you go through this kind of process [referring to the process set in motion by workshops] it helps you also on a personal level not just in the political context, concerning Palestine and Israel I think it teaches you how to listen to the other person. It helps if you get into a fight with your husband or experience a disagreement in the office and I think it gives you the patience to just sit back and listen to the other person and to what it is that they have to say; and take their feelings, their fears, or their crying seriously even if, again, you do not think it is worth while, but you cannot refuse to listen to the other who is in fact trying.

I think the workshop teaches you how to sit down and listen to things you do not like to hear or you disagree with and how to come back and

formulate your ideas and just try to deal with it. It teaches you how to negotiate at the end of the day.

I think what I learnt during the workshops was helpful for dealing with conflicts in general, for example at RIWAQ, and not to freak out about conflicts I encountered, but to realize that it is not the end of the world when you find yourself involved in a conflict; you just need to sit down and listen and you work it out. I think it thought me something very important: that problems have to be worked out. You have to talk without being afraid of talking; and doing that does not mean that you have to fight.

I think at the beginning of the negotiations there was a lot of disagreement and anger. I am sure that in a situation like that, if somebody says something that you do not like, you do not even answer, you know what I mean?

So I do not want to use the word tolerance but I think it does teach you how to deal with the other whoever that other is. It teaches you to handle situations in a calmer way. You learn how to put things in perspective. I do not need to sort everything out right now, or need to convince every person now, if I make one point it is enough.

I think that the complexity of the situation during the workshops makes you feel that it is like a big wall of blocks it is very complicated. You have to be very patient and take it one at a time. Sometimes leave a difficult situation as it is and come back to it later. It is a process where you just feel that you need patience.

And you saw that it was possible to do that?

Yes.

Also with regard to the conflict?

Right, to unwrap it, yes.

So, what you are saying is, that you experienced that it is effective to work on the conflict over a long period of time and let discussions about a certain issue rest for a while, especially when there seems to be a deadlock, and then come back to it again?

Right.

Would you say that the confidence was there from both sides that this was doable?

Right. You also have to realize it is a very energy taking process and there were times when I just felt that I could not go on, that did no that happen when I was taking part in the workshops, but during the last three or four years.

One is just not always in the mood of discussing one's existence, explaining who you are, what you are. Also with Israelis, there is always a lot of explaining involved about who you are, and what your intentions are and eventually you just say: Halas, I am fed up. Workshops are a very taxing process; while being very fulfilling, they also tire you a lot.

Interview with Shimon Shamir, Tel Aviv, Israel, 9 April 2006

Shimon Shamir is Professor Emeritus at Tel Aviv University. He served as Israel's ambassador to Egypt (1988-1990) and as first ambassador to Jordan (1995-1997). He was appointed to the Orr Commission of Inquiry (2001-2003), which investigated clashes between the police and Palestinian Israeli citizens. He has published widely on the subject of Jewish-Arab relations. Among his publications are, "Self Views in Historical Perspective in Egypt and Israel", "The Jews of Egypt", and "Camp David Summit – what went wrong?".

What were you doing in your professional life when you were participating in interactive problem-solving workshops?

I was a professor at the University of Tel Aviv.

What socio-political activities were you engaged in at that time?

None in the periods in which I functioned as ambassador in Cairo and in Amman. During the years in which I served as a diplomat I did not participate in political workshops.

Why did you decide to participate in problem solving workshops?

Because I believe in the method of citizen diplomacy. I think conflict resolution should not be left exclusively to diplomats and certainly not to generals. I thought that with more and more citizens becoming involved in the dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians, this might create an atmosphere that would be conducive toward peace making.

You may remember that at the time of the first workshops it was a taboo for Israelis to meet with Palestinians. One of the initial purposes of initiating workshops was to break this taboo and enable both sides to talk to each other.

Over time this stopped to be an issue. Nowadays talking to Palestinians is no longer a problem for Israelis. Groups of citizens conducting talks with Palestinians have proliferated.

Interactive problem solving workshops, which were once a pioneer initiative, are now just "one drop in the sea" of informal dialogue forums taking place between Israelis and Palestinians. Although IPS has particular methodological aspects it lost its uniqueness in the field of citizen diplomacy.

What kind of new ideas or insights did you gain from the workshop meetings?

In general I gained a better understanding of the positions and the priorities of the other side and its constraints and difficulties. I would say that I gained better insight with regard to fundamental issues, such as the refugee problem. Our "exercises" trying to identify specific points of agreement helped to clarify where the red lines of the other side were drawn and on which issues it felt it was impossible to compromise.

Such exercises were very instructive. As much as one might have learnt from the literature about the Palestinians, it was still difficult to see what their core values and core beliefs were. In the workshops those underlying factors came to the surface.

How did your own position change?

Not in a drastic way, as I already came to the meetings with quite a moderate position. I did not feel that I had to temper my views much further as a result of my participation in the workshops. Actually, sometimes when I was confronted by the other side with a very rigid position, it worked toward the opposite direction, toward polarization. I think, however, that some of the other

Israeli group-members, those who had not been as familiar with the Palestinian side, were considerably influenced.

How did the change of perception come about? Can you remember a concrete example when you realized that something in your conflict perception changed or where you saw that other participants' perception changed?

I can remember moments when I was disappointed by the Palestinian point of view and felt it was unnecessarily rigid. For example, when we were working on a possible solution to the refugee problem there was one Palestinian group-member, who even though he participated on all other issues very productively, when it came to this issue he blocked any attempt at reaching a realistic compromise. Also, when we discussed the question of Jerusalem, I thought it would be easier for the Palestinians to accept a compromise with regard to the holy places in Jerusalem. Whereas we were ready to recognize their full control of the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Haram, they would not recognize any historical link of the Jewish people to the Temple Mount. They insisted on full sovereignty, not even mentioning the existence of Jewish connections to those places.

On the other hand there were times when I was encouraged by the fact that the Palestinian side presented positions that were more moderate than those of the PLO. If you look at the agreements that we managed to reach in our discussions in the workshops you will see this gap. That gave us some hope. It was also encouraging to realize that none of the Palestinian workshop participants supported terrorism or violence in any form.

How influential were the newly gained insights?

It was gratifying to realize that some of our understandings reached a wider public. This after all was one of our assignments. We did not participate in the workshops just to revolutionize ourselves. The idea of this method was to develop an instrument that would eventually influence a wider public. Indeed, following the workshop discussions, I and other Israeli colleagues would write articles in the press or give media interviews. We also spoke with officials. When we reported about the existence of moderate Palestinian positions we were on solid ground because we heard them firsthand. So, insights gained in the workshops served to impact the public. We tried to convince members of the Israeli political elite, we were in touch with such people and reported to them about the content of our meetings. I think that this had some influence.

There is no question that in time such meetings were instrumental in bringing about a change in public opinion in Israel. The Israeli public opinion started from a position of complete denial of the existence of a Palestinian people but it was gradually transformed towards understanding that a particular Palestinian identity did exist and that the Israelis need to relate to this reality. Gradually the majority of the Israeli public accepted the idea that it was necessary to talk to the PLO, which had previously been a taboo and even illegal. The workshop meetings constituted one factor that brought about an understanding that Israel had to talk to the PLO. Also the idea of the two-state solution, which had been rejected for a long time, gained gradually the support of a majority of the Israelis. This revolutionary change in the Israeli attitude was advanced by people, who participated in track-two meetings of this type.

How would you comment on Interactive Problem Solving as a method?

I think one of its methodological weaknesses concerned the selection of participants. There was no systematic mechanism for that. The process of

finding suitable participants is complex and time-consuming. I do not think that there was a method available for doing it efficiently. The workshops themselves were conducted in a very faire mode. The agenda was carefully set and yet professor Kelman was not too rigid about it. When the group wanted to concentrate on some other issue, he would make the necessary changes. He functioned as facilitator and worked in a systematic way. He took detailed notes and prepared comprehensive summaries of the discussions. He carefully chose a co-chair who would create a balance in the third party between Jewish and Arab affiliations; this I found very helpful. Professor Kelman showed great empathy to both sides, as it is indeed required from a third party handling a sensitive situation of this kind.

Interview with Shlomo Gazit, Tel Aviv, Israel, 9 April 2006

Shlomo Gazit is a retired Major General in the Israel Defense Forces and was in the past head of the intelligence service of the Israeli army 1974–1979. Upon his retirement from the IDF, he served as President of the Ben Gurion University in Beersheba for a one four-year term. Since 1988 he has been a member of the staff of Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at the Tel Aviv University. Among his publications are: "*The Carrot and the Stick: Israel's Policy in Judaea and Samaria, 1967-68, " The Arab-Israeli Wars: War and Peace in the Middle East" and "Trapped Fools"*.

What were you doing in your professional life when you were participating in interactive problem-solving workshops?

I am a retired Israeli military and I met Professor Kelman for the first time, when I spent a year at the Center for International Affairs at Harvard University. I was working there on my book "The Carrot and the Stick". He organized a summer seminar on the Palestinian perception of the Israeli-Arab conflict. I joined that seminar and Professor Kelman arranged a number of confidential meetings between a Palestinian-Lebanese Professor and myself. At that time Israelis were not allowed to have any open dialogue with members of the PLO but under the cover of academic premises these meetings became possible.

After this stay at Harvard University, I retired from services and spent a number of years as president of the Ben Gurion University in Israel. If I am not mistaken, Professor Kelman initiated the interactive problem-solving workshops several years later. He spent a year, I think, at the US Institute of Peace in Washington, while I was at the Woodrow Wilson Center and we got together several times. That was, when he told me about the plan of initiating

workshop groups and asked me whether I would like to join, and I said that I would be glad to do so. That was how it all started.

Why did you decide to participate in problem-solving workshops?

I have difficulties remembering that, as I was participating in many different Track Two initiatives at that time, sometimes even with the same people. I am saying this because I am a very strong believer in the importance of Track Two meetings and the importance of having a dialogue and of getting together and understanding each other. Because of my close connection with the Israeli decision-making leadership, I always made it a point to report after each meeting, what had been discussed, what the special points were and what new ideas had been brought up. I tried to influence the Minister of Defense or even the Prime Minister with those new insights.

So I saw the problem solving workshop meetings as one of those many different Track Two dialogues in which I had been involved.

What kind of new ideas did you gain during the problem solving workshops?

I remember some of those meetings as quite frustrating because Professor Kelman was sometimes too theoretical and trying too much to put the conflict issues into the framework of his academic theory. I found that this attempt did not work. I remember that the workshop group had some serious disputes on that subject.

My personal benefit from the workshop meetings consisted more of contacts with some of the participants, with Palestinian friends with whom we developed a dialogue, than of advancements on conflict issues.

One of the concrete outputs of the workshop dialogue was Bitter Lemons, which two former participants initiated during the meetings, which is an extremely important development.

How did your conflict perception change during the workshop meetings?

My perception of the conflict had always been on the optimistic side. I believe my first dialogue after taking off the uniform was with the American Psychiatrist Association, which had organized meetings with Israelis and Egyptians in the 1980s. Those meetings also moved in the same direction [as problem-solving workshops]. When I brought my wife to one of those meetings for the first time, she reacted with astonishment that those counterparts were "normal" human beings, just like us.

How would you comment on interactive problem solving as a method?

I would divide the effort into two parts. One was extremely positive as the method and the personal contribution of Professor Kelman were totally dedicated to the attempt of bringing two parties to sit down together, to discuss, to analyze their positions as they were and to try and find breakthroughs towards a new step. This part was very successful; we made a lot of progress. The other one was the effort's theoretical pattern of what a dialogue between the two political camps should look like. I found that the effort was trying to put that discourse into very clear parameters. I do not believe that this is possible.

Interview with a Palestinian Political Scientist, Ramallah, West Bank, 11 April 2006.

A PhD in Middle East politics from the University of Durham and co-founder and co-editor of bitterlemons.org. As a member of the Palestinian delegation for the Madrid Middle East Peace Conference he participated in the Washington negotiations from 1991 to 1993. He was appointed as Palestinian National Authority Minister of Labor in 2002, and as Planning Minister in 2005. He is Director of the Government Media Centre and lectures at Bir Zeit University.

What were you doing in your professional life when you were participating in interactive problem solving-workshops in the 1990s?

I used to be a lecturer for cultural studies at Birzeit University at that time and I was also the director of a non-governmental organization and the director of the Jerusalem Media Center, which used to do media and research.

What kind of social political activities were you involved in?

I was involved, for example, in activities of the Peace Camp in Israel[3] focusing on furthering Israeli-Palestinian interactions.

Why did you decide to participate in a problem-solving workshop?

Because I was invited [laughs]; I have always been a believer in the importance of interactions between Israelis and Palestinians. I always thought that one of the problems was that they did not listen to us nor did we listen to them, although we have so much to tell each other about our lives, about how we think. I always thought that we needed to listen to them and to understand them.

That is why I never wasted an opportunity of interacting with Israelis. I used to do that through grass-root activities. During the First Intifada, which was a non-violent Intifada I used to be active in the fighting with grass-root Israeli activists.

So I followed the invitation of Herb Kelman to participate in problem-solving workshops, because they were consistent with what I believe to be useful in terms of activities contributing to mutual understanding and hopefully to preparing the ground for a peaceful process, rather than an ongoing violence.

How did your perception of the conflict change during your participation in the workshops?

I would not say that it changed a lot because it was not the first encounter that I had with the other side. I knew the two faces of Israel very well, before I first participated in a problem-solving workshop. I had been introduced to the ugly face of Israel, when I was arrested and spent several years of my life in prison and I experienced the Israeli police and the torturing, etc. At the same time I had very positive experiences with Israelis in the Peace Camp.

The workshops gave me an improved perception of the Israeli situation because we used to have systematic discussions with Israelis, who were specialized and experienced on certain aspects of the conflict, like on refugees or historical issues.

First, the workshops broadened and refined my knowledge and experience about different views of the Israeli side.

Second, the systematic discussions that we used to have, helped me to differentiate with regard to my own views of the conflict. I think that a lot of the Israeli participants probably also experienced that. It helped me also to see how valid my response to the different Israeli traditional arguments was.

What particular new insights did you gain from the workshop discussions?

It is difficult to think of something specific, I learnt a lot of additional things in spite of my previous experience and background on the issue. The discussions were useful in terms of getting into the details of conflict issues and also in terms of the trade off possibilities for the different components of the conflict. It enabled me to learn about the limits of the potential Israeli negotiating positions, which correspond to the limits of the different Israeli parties, because there are differences between them on those issues. It helped me also to understand the differences and the different extents of flexibility between the different Palestinian positions in response to the Palestinian demands and requirements. The meetings also helped creating some confidence between us especially as some of us became involved in the official negotiations later on. The same was true for the Israeli side. So, that was another achievement, which resulted from the previously gained familiarity on the positions and the people, in addition to some confidence that had resulted from this familiarity.

How did your perception of the Israeli side change through your workshop participation?

I did not see them [the Israelis] as being different compared to my previous perception, but I got to know Israelis, their different positions and their way of thinking in more details and in a much deeper way than before. It is one thing to get an impression through personal meetings, and another to gain information through reading or listening to the media. Having these lengthy detailed systematic workshops, with discussions that went into the details of the details and enabled both sides to learn more and increase their

understanding on a much deeper level, showed the variety of possible views and positions of the other side.

How did the view that you had of your own community change?

I am not sure that there are relations between the workshop experience and the perception of my own community. These encounters were directed at understanding the other side and to be understood by the other side but not about understanding our own community.

What I mean is that, sometimes when you look at yourself through someone else's eyes you see yourself differently.

Yes that is possible, but I do not think that this was the case for me.

Were you able to use some new ideas that you gained from the workshops in your professional or social political activities?

In an informal way, yes. I have used information and expertise, which I gained from various activities either internally in my writing or teaching, or when I exchanged views with people from my side engaged in governmental or non-governmental activities. I also used such information in relation to activities with international people or with Israelis when I started to interact with them on an official level, at a later stage.

How would you comment on Interactive Problem Solving as a method?

There were two approaches in general that were used one was intended to produce written statements, the other focused mainly on discussions.

In the first stage of the workshop we used to have systematic discussions without writing. At the later stages we started to try to write. The approach focusing on discussions was, in my view, more productive and useful than the one focusing on producing written statements. The phase was not mature enough to produce writings that would include significant progress in degrees of certainty. So if you looked at the writings we produced, you would see that the areas of agreement we were able to identify were not new, those were areas on which it was possible to reach Israeli-Palestinian agreements and the areas, which we did not agree on, were areas that were known to be difficult. The contribution was little in terms of bridging the gap, when we attempted to produce written statements.

While the previous phase, which was about discussions without the objective of agreeing, be it within the dialogue or in writing, was more useful because it was freer and people were more forthcoming. We used to achieve more because nobody would worry that what he or she was saying needed to be reported. I found the style, which had less of an official negotiation character, more useful.

I think that the approach was overall relatively successful in that first phase.

Interview with Herbert C. Kelman, Cambridge, USA, 3 September 2008.

Herbert C. Kelman is the Richard Clarke Cabot Professor of Social Ethics, Emeritus, at Harvard University and was (from 1993 to 2003) Director of the Program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Harvard's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs. He has developed Interactive Problem Solving and applied it to the Arab-Israeli conflict, with special emphasis on its Israeli-Palestinian component. He regularly publishes on issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and on aspects of theory and practice of conflict resolution. . He is recipient of many awards, including the Grawemeyer Award for Ideas Improving World Order (1997), and the Austrian Medal of Honor for Science and Art First Class (1998) and the Socrates Prize (2009) granted by the German institution Zentrale für Mediation in Berlin to honour outstanding work to the enhancements of mediation science and practice.

Which important changes in the perception, or in the behavior of workshop participants, did you experience during the period of the Oslo Process?

Let me just mention a couple of things that are on the top of my mind. These things go back to the earlier years. One thing that I noticed in some of the early workshops was, that some of the Israeli participants, and you have to understand that I am generalizing here, had a tendency to dominate the discussions. This reflected in a way the dynamics of the real world in terms of power differentials. There were occasions when Israelis told Palestinians: If you want Israelis to be open to negotiations and policy changes you need to do x, y and z. The Palestinians of course resented that the Israelis told them what they had to do.

This was one of the cases where the third party would intervene

Although, there are power differences between the two sides, I always argue that the power differentials are not only one sided, in military, political and economic terms, the Israelis are clearly more powerful, but in terms of

international reputation, human rights support and moral dimensions the Palestinians have more power.

Where there is a power differential, it is part of the job of the third party to help to empower the weaker party by turning to them and say: let's see what the other side has to say. I have felt, in my groups at least, and this might even be true in the more general terms of the outside world, less of that and more of the readiness to also listen to the other side. I remember one person in particular, who was very marked for doing that and knew exactly what he wanted and was very precise in terms of formulating what the other side had to do. I remember that same person at a later stage volunteered at one occasion and said: "we need to hear what the Palestinians have to say on that subject, first." So there, I think the [workshop] experience sensitized them to that tendency to compensate for and to be aware of the power differences. That is one example of a change that occurred. It is a very natural one that comes from what the workshops involve. You cannot spend so much time talking to the other side without realizing that they have their own thoughts, their own needs, and that they have their own rights. I think that the atmosphere of the workshops, the way they are structured, and the occasional third-party interventions contribute to that.

On the Palestinian side, I noticed – also in the earlier years but I saw it resurfacing recently – a tendency to trivialize Israeli security concerns, in the backdrop of Israel being a nuclear power. Sometimes this led to a process of making the psychology behind Israeli security concerns transparent by relating them to what the Jews had experienced in Europe. But I think that, what I felt over the years was, the greater part of Palestinian participants recognized that the Israelis *do* have security concerns. Because the concern they have of sending their children on a bus to school is not minimized by the fact that somewhere there are nuclear weapons. In more general terms, Palestinians

realized that the strategic situation of Israel in the Middle East creates understandable security concerns, which may be magnified by historical experiences but are related to hard realities; and the Palestinians were willing to – in a sense you might say – accept Israeli's equality with regard to that example [of security concerns].

So these are a couple of examples of observed changes that come to mind. Each example in its own way, involves recognition of equality about the other side in important respects, which is of course one of the principles [of IPS]. One of the ground-rules of the workshop is equality in the setting, even though there are inequalities, and you have to be aware of these inequalities, in the real world.

Within the groups, particularly when you are dealing with people who have known each other, or who have participated not just in our activities but in a range of Track Two activities, there are people with experience in this sort of thing. There is a kind of "ingroupness", which does not transcend the conflict by any means they all know what their problems are, but at least in terms of entering a discussion it seems to transcend it. In the sense that participants can talk with each other as people, who are – I would almost say – like professionals, like people with the same line of work, who can talk to each other although they may have a lot of differences in terms of social origins and all of that.

There is almost a degree of professionalism in talking about these issues that has developed within a certain cadre. As some of the people say in your interviews, there is a certain cadre of people, who are involved in all of these activities, which by no means transcends the conflict but influences their relations in terms that they can relate to each other.

By the way, in the interviews, I saw that both Yossi Alpher and Ghassan Khatib talked about Bitter Lemons, and I think it was Alpher who talks about

the relationship that he and Ghassan have developed. This is an example of the kind of thing that I have in mind. And I agree with what Yossi says, that this does not mean that they agree with each other. They actually disagree. And they disagreed perhaps more than others. For example, Ghassan Khatib, and Moshe Ma'oz agree much more than Ghassan and Yossi Alpher do. There is this shared element, which does not solve the conflict, but which is not an insignificant development in terms of the notion of creating cadres [of people] who are used to communicate with each other and who see value in it, even though they do not see it as solving all the problems. Both Yossi and Ghassan, each in their own way, are very realistic about the limitations of personal relations, but they were supportive for them in a constructive way.

I am sort of very pleased about that. They may have gotten to know each other independently of our groups but that is where they worked together for a while.

And during the workshops they realized that it was possible to work together on a joint project.

Yes, and they saw the need for that and the value of it and most importantly the possibility for it.

What would you say is the nature of these changes that you described?

It consists of sort of a comfortable acceptance of the other, of what you have in common with the other, which really is almost independent of political positions. I suppose it would be very difficult for this to happen if you had extremists on the two sides, which we do not, we have moderates with varying degrees of moderation [smiles]. Within that group there was kind of an

acceptance of the other, an acceptance of the other's equality as a person, as somebody with rights and with values and abilities and talents.

It is a comfortable way of dealing with each other like between professionals. I use the word professional to refer to the relationship between workshop participants, but do not want to imply that it is professional in the strict sense of the term, but it has that qualities, that you can work together on a common set of assumptions, a common methodology. And a common purpose, although with variations of that purpose, what the one ultimately hopes for is not the same as what the other ultimately hopes for, but it offers the opportunity for accommodating each other, it is that sort of thing that happened. It involves a kind of respect for the other, which you do not have in societies in conflict. I think a lot of it comes from meeting each other in a setting, in which people do function as equals.

It is often trivialized that people get to like each other. If you participate in this experience you meet other people in ways that go beyond the conflict, that even go beyond the resolution of the conflict, you meet them as people. But I think the liking is a small part of it and I do not think that it is the most important part of it. It is more respect than liking that is important. It is the fact that you *can* establish a working relationship with people from the other side.

I would imagine that similar kind of thing happen also in official diplomacy.

So it is respect that I would stress here, which is separate from liking and definitely separate from agreement.

Can this qualify as a change of identity that occurs within a personal identity layer? In the sense that conflict is experienced at a personal and on a political level, and that this change happened on the personal level.

But it has political implications as well. The change in identity, I would say, is that you see yourself as someone who can work with the people from the other side. In a bitter conflict there is a total separation of self from the other. The other is evil and dangerous and stupid. And now that other becomes a potential partner. It is a partnership that emerges. Partnership has many meanings; it is a working partnership, a working relationship that happens.

By the way, I have written about something, although I was not there, and it is based on very indirect information, I felt that this kind of a working relationship or partnership developed between Rabin and Arafat. And this kind of relationship has limitations. As long as Rabin was alive, I think it had an important role.

I ventured to say something that nobody can disprove nor can I prove it, that if Rabin had lived on, that partnership might have made a big difference; that was a big loss to the process. They were the strangest partners, it was not predictable but there was something in the dynamics that allowed for that to happen. But this is a different situation of ours obviously, but it made me think of that change you mentioned.

That the change that was going on was a change in terms of how I see myself in reference to the conflict and in reference to the other side.

Yes, and that it is not a total …

Monolithic enemy image?

Exactly, monolithic view of the other side, as it was before. And for our purposes, the important thing is to see that there are people on the other side with whom you can work. That is what it is, and that is a lot [laughs]. So, it

helps at times to like people, but it is not the key element; that is what I would argue.

These changes, maybe also changes on a more political level, are they still in place, or have they been reversed?

Let me put it this way, on the base of my own experience, you know, I am working with a very select group of people, but I have been able to witness this group of people in professional meetings. Of course, there were moments of impatience and annoyance and anger, that happened every once in a while, but it is amazing how rarely it happened, and if it did, it would not matter because people were there to work together.

With regard to the current conflict situation, I have been thinking about going back to the old format of the workshop and just hold discussions without focusing on producing a written product. Reading your interviews with former participants has helped me come closer to a decision with regard to that.

You said that Israelis have continued to argue before and after the Oslo Process that there is no negotiation partner on the side of the Palestinians, but that they now argue on a different basis. Pre Oslo the existence of the Palestinians as a people was not recognized and they therefore could not have had legitimate political representation. Post Oslo, the existence of the Palestinians as a people remains unquestioned. The reason why there is no negotiation partner now, is because Israel criticizes that Abbas cannot implement an eventual negotiated agreement as his power is curtailed by the influence of the Hamas. So, the acceptance of the Palestinians as a people is a change that happened during the Oslo Process that has not been reversed, right?

It began happening during the Intifada. The Intifada persuaded a lot of Israelis who were not thinking of this before, that the Palestinians are here to stay, that they are a people and have the aspirations of a people.

I was in Gaza at the time the Oslo Agreement was signed and before and after that time I was in Israel. There was an editorial in one of the conservative Israeli papers saying that the reactions of the Palestinians to the Oslo Agreement, the joy that it ignited, reminded them of what happened in the Jewish community in Palestine in November 1947, when the UN partition resolution was passed, which basically called for the establishment of a Jewish state. It reminded them of their reaction, of their dancing in the streets. That was an important thing to me, because it was – although covertly – a recognition that there was a people aiming for a state, and the empathy that this implied: they remind us of ourselves, when we first realized that there was a possibility for a state. That was a major fact for many Israelis, and I think this is an irreversible change, if anything is irreversible, but I think with all of the ups and downs, this is a change in perception that I think represents a real change.

In the sense, that this change was really integrated into the identity structure of the two peoples' identities?

I think so, at least to some extend. Of course there are still people who cannot fathom this idea. The point about my current formulation of the two-states-one-country solution, I would like to say that the land belongs to both peoples. I would argue that this is not at the core of the identity. At the core of the identity is: the land belongs to me. It is overlaid by the exclusiveness of that but the exclusiveness is not part of the essence. I would like to believe that.

I agree [we both laugh]. Maybe it would be possible to achieve this change of perception through the introduction of a conceptual model of state and country that participants could work with and then apply to their realistic situation?

This basic idea is not new and it is not even mine. It emerged during a workshop in 1982. I do not remember whether somebody else or myself started to develop the concept of a united country with divided sovereignty and that comes from an old concept, you know people have been talking about the solution to the problem of Jerusalem, which still holds today, the solution is a united city with divided sovereignty, and that sovereignty is not all there is, you can be united and still have divided sovereignties. I suppose in some sense Switzerland represents that kind of a model, although it is a complicated one, and you cannot quite reproduce a Swiss situation. But that was at the heart of the idea.

So you think some of the changes that happened during the Oslo Process are still in place?

Yes. I mean, someone was saying that most Israelis have never met a Palestinian; they would meet Palestinians who live in Israel, but not Palestinians from the West Bank or Gaza. So we are talking about a very small group of people, who underwent that change, and I do not know how large a generalization you can draw from that, but I think a lot of social change happens in small circles and than you have, what is called the diffusion of innovations, change diffuses in its own ways.

I read somewhere, maybe even in one of your interviews, that only 3 percent of the population is involved in Israeli-Palestinian interactions, and so we are talking of a very small sample of the population. Nevertheless, they are

experimenting with a new relationship, which may then expand, it will never expand to the entire population, but it does not necessarily need to, for the purpose of establishing peaceful and productive relations. That is really, in a way, what I think was happening in these small enclaves [of workshop participants and other people taking part in Israel-Palestinian interactions], and it is still there, these enclaves exist. And I would like to believe that it is a contribution to change, which will expand, even tough these people are experiencing very hard times now.

Notes:

[1] bitterlemons is an internet platform (www.bitterlemons.com) on which Israelis and Palestinians publish articles on prominent issues of concern regarding conflict issues and Israeli-Palestinian relations. It is produced and edited by Ghassan Khatib and Yossi Alpher, who also contribute articles. Its goal is to contribute to increase mutual understanding through the open exchange of ideas. bitterlemons aspires to impact on the way Palestinians and Israelis, but also the international public think about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

[2] RIWAQ is a Ramallah based non-profit organization for the protection and development of architectural heritage in Palestine.
Riwaq's activities include the National Registry of Historic Buildings, the implementation of some fifty conservation projects in major towns and villages, a number of Protection Plans for Historic Centers, the publication of ten books on cultural heritage, and a Photo Archive.
In 2006, RIWAQ won the Dubai International Award for its successful Job Creation through Conservation project. The objective of the project was to tackle the problem of high unemployment in Palestine and to contribute to the organization's main aim of protecting cultural heritage in Palestine.

[3] The Israeli Peace Camp is a self-described collection of movements which claim to strive for peace with the Arab neighbours of Israel, including the Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese, and encourage co-existence with the Arab citizens of Israel. The peace camp is mostly associated with left wing politics.

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